TRUE MESSIAH - PROPERLY ANOINTED; FALSE MESSIAH - SMEARED WITH OINTMENT[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

The ninth chapter in the Book of Daniel has been a popular item in the portfolio of Christian missionaries. The passage that is commonly extracted from this chapter as an example of a “fulfilled messianic prophecy" is Daniel 9:24-27 because, according to most Christian translations, it contains two direct references to “the Messiah” (Daniel 9:25-26). Using mistranslations and mathematical hocus-pocus, missionaries transform this passage into a prophecy that allegedly foretells the coming of Jesus and his crucifixion.

The analysis presented in this essay demonstrates that the claims are inconsistent with what the Hebrew Bible teaches. Moreover, since these claims also include references to being anointed, the anointing process, as defined and applied in the Hebrew Bible, is cast into a template against which the "anointing" of Jesus, as described in the New Testament, is compared in order to test its validity.

II. CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH TRANSLATIONS OF DANIEL 9:25-26

Table II-1 shows side-by-side English renditions and the Hebrew text of the passage Daniel 9:25-26. The Hebrew term מָשִׁיחַ (***mashi’ah***) and its respective renditions in the two translations are shown in highlighted form.

[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:

- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as “h”
  - The letter כ is transliterated as “ch”
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as “k”
  - The letter ק is transliterated as “q”
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted “e” following the consonant
  - There is no “doubling” of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

<u>Table II-1</u> – Daniel 9:25-26

	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	
	Daniel 9		**דניאל ט**	
25	Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto **the Messiah** the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.	And you should know and understand that, from the emergence of the word to restore and build Jerusalem until **an anointed** ruler, [shall be] seven weeks; and [in] sixty-two weeks it will be restored and be built, street and moat, but in troubled times.	וְתֵדַע וְתַשְׂכֵּל מִן־מֹצָא דָבָר לְהָשִׁיב וְלִבְנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלִַם עַד־מָשִׁיחַ נָגִיד שָׁבֻעִים שִׁבְעָה וְשָׁבֻעִים שִׁשִּׁים וּשְׁנַיִם תָּשׁוּב וְנִבְנְתָה רְחוֹב וְחָרוּץ וּבְצוֹק הָעִתִּים:	כה
26	And after threescore and two weeks shall **Messiah** be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.	And after the sixty-two weeks, **an anointed one** will be cut off, and [he] will be no more; and the city and the Sanctuary will be destroyed by people of the coming ruler, and his end will come about like a flood; and by end of the war, there will be desolation.	וְאַחֲרֵי הַשָּׁבֻעִים שִׁשִּׁים וּשְׁנַיִם יִכָּרֵת מָשִׁיחַ וְאֵין לוֹ וְהָעִיר וְהַקֹּדֶשׁ יַשְׁחִית עַם נָגִיד הַבָּא וְקִצּוֹ בַשֶּׁטֶף וְעַד קֵץ מִלְחָמָה נֶחֱרֶצֶת שֹׁמֵמוֹת:	כו

A significant disagreement exists between the two translations in their respective renditions of the noun מָשִׁיחַ. A study of the applications of this term in the Hebrew Bible helps resolve this issue.

III. REVIEW OF HEBREW TERMINOLOGY

According to the Hebrew Bible, the men who were selected to serve as **high priest** [כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל (***KOHEN GADOL***)] and **king** [מֶלֶךְ (***MElech***)] had to undergo a ritual anointing ceremony. The Hebrew root verb משח (***mem-shin-<u>het</u>***), which appears in the Hebrew Bible 70 times in various conjugations, is used on 63 occasions to describe an ***act of anointing***, i.e., applying a specially prepared oil or compound to someone or something for the purpose of sanctification or consecration; and on the seven remaining occasions, it is used in the context of covering something with paint or oil for various other purposes.

Someone who went through the process of anointing was referred to as מָשִׁיחַ, **an anointed one**, in the Hebrew Bible. The term מָשִׁיחַ, which derives from the root verb משח, is used in the Hebrew Bible on 39 occasions in various declensions and forms. The salient point concerning the applications of מָשִׁיחַ in the Hebrew Bible is that <u>none</u> of these refer to the Messiah. The reason is that the usage of the noun מָשִׁיחַ as the current Hebrew term for Messiah is a product of the first century B.C.E. – information that emerged from research on the Dead Sea Scrolls. Around that time, the Jewish messianic vision experienced a significant paradigm shift from the

expectation of an era (i.e., the "End of Days") to an expectation of a Jewish leader who will deliver Israel (a "Redeemer"). This fact alone defeats the claim by Christian missionaries concerning references to the Messiah in Daniel 9:25-26.

IV. Applications of the Noun מָשִׁיחַ in the Hebrew Bible

An analysis of the 39 applications of the term מָשִׁיחַ (35 nouns and 4 adjectives) in the Hebrew Bible, and the way these are rendered in most Christian Bibles, provides biblical evidence that refutes the claims regarding its occurrences in Daniel 9:25-26.

Table IV-1 shows the 39 instances of מָשִׁיחַ in the Hebrew Bible. Each form of the term is shown separately along with its frequency of occurrence, a pronunciation guide (CAPS identify the accented syllable), the respective Scriptural citations, the correct English translation, and the respective KJV rendition. Chapter and verse citations are from the Hebrew Bible; verse numbers in Christian Bibles, if different from the Hebrew Bible, are shown in brackets.

Table IV-1 – The term מָשִׁיחַ in the Hebrew Bible and its KJV renditions

Hebrew Term	#	Pronunciation	References	Correct Translation	KJV Rendition
מָשִׁיחַ	3	*maSHI'ah*	2Samuel 1:21	an anointed [one]	anointed
			Daniel 9:25	**an anointed [one]**	**the Messiah**
			Daniel 9:26	**an anointed [one]**	**Messiah**
*הַמָּשִׁיחַ	4	*ha'maSHI'ah*	Leviticus 4:3,5,16, 6:15[22]	the anointed [Priest]	[the priest] that is anointed
מְשִׁיחַ	8	*m^{e}SHI'ah*	1Samuel 24:6,10, 26:16; 2Samuel 1:14,16, 19:22[21], 23:1; Lamentations 4:20	anointed [one] of -	anointed [of]
בִּמְשִׁיחַ	3	*bim'SHI'ah*	1Samuel 26:9,11,23	against the anointed [one] of -	against [the LORD's] anointed
לִמְשִׁיחַ	1	*lim'SHI'ah*	1Samuel 24:7	to the anointed [one] of -	to [the LORD's] anointed
מְשִׁיחִי	1	*m^{e}shiHI*	1Samuel 2:35	my anointed [one]	mine anointed
לִמְשִׁיחִי	1	*lim'shiHI*	Psalms 132:17	for/to my anointed [one]	for mine anointed
מְשִׁיחֶךָ	6	*m^{e}shiHEcha*	Habakkuk 3:13; Psalms 84:10[9], 89:39[38],52[51], 132:10; 2Chronicles 6:42	your anointed [one]	thine anointed
מְשִׁיחוֹ	7	*m^{e}shiHO*	1Samuel 2:10, 12:3,5, 16:6; Psalms 2:2, 20:7[6], 28:8	his anointed [one]	his anointed, *[the LORD's] anointed
לִמְשִׁיחוֹ	3	*Lim'shiHO*	2Samuel 22:51; Isaiah 45:1; Psalms 18:51[50]	to his anointed [one]	to his anointed
בִּמְשִׁיחָי	2	*bim'shiHAI*	Psalms 105:15; 1Chronicles 16:22	at/upon my anointed [ones]	[touch not] mine anointed

* - These are the 4 instances of מָשִׁיחַ as an adjective.

The KJV rendition of the term מָשִׁיחַ differs from the generic “an anointed one” in only two cases out of the 39 instances, both occurring in Daniel 9:25-26. Given the historical fact that the association of the term מָשִׁיחַ with the Messiah post-dates the Book of Daniel, it appears that the KJV translators rendered the term in this manner in order to create a pointer to the Christian Messiah.

A related issue arises from the manner in which some other Christian Bibles render the noun מָשִׁיחַ in Daniel 9:25-26, as shown in Table IV-2.

Table IV-2 – The term מָשִׁיחַ as rendered in other Christian Bibles

Source	Verse	Source Translation	Correct Translation
Amplified Bible (AMP)	Daniel 9:25 Daniel 9:26	**the A**nointed **O**ne	**an a**nointed **o**ne
New International Version (NIV)	Daniel 9:25 Daniel 9:26	**the A**nointed **O**ne	**an a**nointed **o**ne
New Living Translation (NLT)	Daniel 9:25 Daniel 9:26	**the A**nointed **O**ne	**an a**nointed **o**ne
World English Bible (WEB)	Daniel 9:25 Daniel 9:26	**the A**nointed **O**ne	**an a**nointed **o**ne

The translation of מָשִׁיחַ as “the Anointed One”, although closer to the correct “an anointed one”, still contains Christological bias, though it is more subtle. The purpose of definite article “the” and the capitalization of the terms in the expression “Anointed One” is, by design, a pointer to Jesus, the Messiah of Christianity.

For the sake of fairness, it should be noted, however, that not all Christian Bibles have mistranslated מָשִׁיחַ in Daniel 9:25-26. Among the Christian Bibles that translate the term correctly are: *Basic Bible in English* (BBE), *Revised Standard Version* (RSV), and *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV).

V. ANOINTING ACCORDING TO THE HEBREW BIBLE

A. The process of anointing

According to the accounts in the Hebrew Bible, the substance and the ritual are the two significant components of the anointing process.

1. The substance

In order to be considered properly anointed, a king (or high priest) had to be sprinkled with a special substance that was stored in a special container, and which was prepared from pure olive oil, according to the following formula:

Exodus 30:22-25 – (22) And the L-rd spoke to Moses, saying, (23) "And you, take for yourself spices of the finest sort - of pure myrrh five hundred [sheqel weights]; of fragrant cinnamon half of it, two hundred and fifty [sheqel weights]; of fragrant cane two hundred and fifty [sheqel weights], (24) and of cassia five hundred

[sheqel weights] according to the sacred sheqel, and one hin of olive oil. (25) And you shall make it onto an oil of sacred anointment [שֶׁמֶן מִשְׁחַת-קֹדֶשׁ (*SHEmen mish'HAT-QOdesh*)] a perfumed compound according to the art of the perfumer; it shall be an oil of sacred anointment [שֶׁמֶן מִשְׁחַת-קֹדֶשׁ]."

No other substance is acceptable for anointing and, being a holy substance, this anointing oil had to be stored in the (portable) Tabernacle while the Israelites were in the wilderness and, later on, in the Temple in Jerusalem.

2. The ritual

Moses was commanded to anoint his brother Aaron as the first high priest:

Exodus 29:7 – And then you shall take the anointing oil, and pour [it] upon his head, and anoint him.

The Hebrew Bible contains several accounts that describe the anointing of royalty in Israel.

King Saul

Saul was anointed as King of Israel by the prophet Samuel, who poured the special oil on his head:

1 Samuel 10:1 - And Samuel took the vial of oil, and poured it on his [Saul's] head, and kissed him. And he [Samuel] said, "Indeed, the L-rd has anointed you to be a ruler over His inheritance."

King David

David, the son of Jesse, was anointed as King of Israel by the prophet Samuel, who poured the special oil on his head:

1 Samuel 16:13 - And Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him [David] in the midst of his brothers. And a spirit of the L-rd passed over David from that day forth, and Samuel arose and went to Ramah.

King Solomon

Solomon was anointed King of Israel by the High Priest, Zadok,, who poured the special oil on his head, in the presence of the prophet Nathan:

1 Kings 1:34,39,45 - (34) And Zadok the [high] priest and Nathan the prophet shall anoint him [Solomon] there as king over Israel, and blow the horn and say, "[Long] live King Solomon."
(39) And Zadok the [High] Priest took the horn of oil from the Tabernacle [the Sanctuary] and anointed Solomon, and they blew the shofar [ram's horn], and all the people said, "Long live king Solomon."
(45) And Zadok the [high] priest and Nathan the prophet anointed him [Solomon]

king in Gihon, and they came up from there rejoicing, and (therefore) the city was in an uproar; that is the noise you were hearing.

B. A template for the anointing of kings

The Biblical accounts of the anointing of the first three kings of Israel – Saul, David, and Solomon – contain the following six unique elements of a template for the process of anointing royalty of Israel, one of whom will be מָשִׁיחַ:

[1] A special preparation from pure olive oil was used as the oil of anointing.

[2] Being sacred, the anointing oil was stored in the Temple.

[3] A universally recognized prophet performed the ritual of anointing a king.

[4] The prophets used **the** vial of oil, or **the** horn of oil, to anoint the new king, not merely **a** vial of oil or **a** horn of oil.[2]

[5] The oil of anointing was poured only on the head.

[6] Anointing was tantamount to crowning a king (or appointing a high priest).[3]

VI. ANOINTING ACCORDING TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

This template for the anointing process can now be used to test the validity of the anointing of Jesus, as it is described in the New Testament.

A. The process of anointing

1. The substance

The four Gospel authors describe the substance used on Jesus as follows:

Matthew 26:7-9(KJV) – (7) There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat. (8) But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? (9) For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.

Mark 14:3-5(KJV) – (3) And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head. (4) And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? (5) For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.

Luke 7:37(KJV) - And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,

---

[2] King David and his royal descendants were anointed with the sacred oil poured from "the horn". According to the Jewish Sages, this indicated the superiority of the Davidic kings over the non-Davidic kings of Israel (e.g., Saul), who were anointed using "the vial".

[3] Saul, David, and Solomon all sat on the throne as kings soon after being anointed. They successfully fought those nations that were enemies of Israel. They commanded entire governments, complete with soldiers, spies, tax collectors, foreign ambassadors, treasuries, palace servants and courts.

John 12:3-5(KJV) – (3) Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. (4) Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, (5) Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?

The data on the anointing substance are summarized in Table VI.A.1-1.

Table VI.A.1-1 – Anointing substance according to the Four Gospels

Source	Substance	Container	Sacred/Profane
Gospel of Matthew	Expensive ointment	Alabaster box	Profane
Gospel of Mark	Expensive ointment of spikenard	Alabaster box	Profane
Gospel of Luke	Ointment	Alabaster box	Unspecified
Gospel of John	Expensive ointment of spikenard	Unspecified	Profane

2. The ritual

All four Gospel authors describe the manner in which Jesus was anointed:

Matthew 26:7(KJV) - There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.

Mark 14:3(KJV) - And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.

Luke 7:37-38,46(KJV) – (37) And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, (38) And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.
(46) My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

John 11:2(KJV) - (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)

John 12:3(KJV) - Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

The data on the anointing ritual are summarized in Table VI.A.1-2.

Table VI.A.1-2 – Anointing ritual according to the Four Gospels

Source	Anointer	Placement of substance
Gospel of Matthew	A woman	On the head of Jesus
Gospel of Mark	A woman	On the head of Jesus
Gospel of Luke[4]	A woman	On the feet of Jesus
Gospel of John	Mary of Bethany	On the feet of Jesus

[4] In Luke 7:46 Jesus actually admits that his head was not anointed with oil. Not that it would have made any difference if Simon had poured oil on his head, since Simon was not a recognized prophet of Israel who had access to the sacred oil that was kept in the Temple.

According to the Hebrew Bible, the purpose of the anointing process is to crown a king (or appoint a high priest). Yet, according to the New Testament, the purpose anointing Jesus was neither of the above:

> **Matthew 26:12(KJV) - For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.**
>
> **Mark 14:8(KJV) - She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.**

B. Elements of the ritual of anointing Jesus

The elements of the process that was described in the Four Gospels as the anointing of Jesus are listed below in the same order as the elements in the template for the anointing process that was developed in Section V-B:

[1] The substance used to anoint Jesus was an ointment of spikenard.[5]

[2] It is unknown from where the costly ointment of spikenard came. It clearly was not a sacred substance, since people complained about having wasted it by pouring it on Jesus rather than selling it and giving the money to the poor.

[3] Jesus was anointed by a woman (Mary of Bethany, who is described as a sinner).

[4] The ointment used on Jesus was contained in an alabaster box.[6]

[5] There are conflicting accounts in the New Testament about where on his body the anointing substance was applied to Jesus. The accounts in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark say it was applied to his head; while the accounts in the Gospels of Luke and John state it was applied to his feet only.

[6] Jesus declared that his anointing was a preparation for burial, i.e., for death, and not for kingship.[7]

VII. COMPARING THE ANOINTING OF JESUS WITH THE REQUIREMENTS IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

Table VII-1 contains an element-by-element comparison of the anointing process in the template against the accounts described in the Gospels. For each element in the template, a **YES** or **NO** indicates whether or not the respective element from the Gospel accounts meets the specification set forth in the Hebrew Bible.

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[5] *The American Heritage Dictionary* (Second College Edition, Houghton Mifflin Company, Publishers [1991]), describes **spikenard** as: "**1. An aromatic plant, *Nardostachys jatamansi*, of India, having rose-purple flowers. 2. A costly ointment of antiquity, probably prepared from the spikenard.**"

[6] The authors of the New Testament refer to Jesus as the "son of David", implying that he is from the royal line of King David: **Matthew 1:1(KJV) - The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.** If, as claimed in the New Testament, Jesus were a bona fide king of the Davidic dynasty, why was the anointing substance taken from *an alabaster box* and not from that special vessel called *the horn*?

[7] The New Testament is silent on whether Jesus sat on the throne of David during his lifetime, and whether he led a Jewish army in any battles against Israel's enemies and defeated them. Likewise, there is no mention in the New Testament of Jesus being in command of an entire political government.

Table VII-1 – Hebrew Bible specifications versus New Testament accounts of anointing

Item	Specifications in the Hebrew Bible	According to the New Testament	Comments	Valid?
[1]	The oil of anointing was a special mixture of spices and pure olive oil.	The substance used to anoint Jesus was an ointment of spikenard.	Ointment of spikenard, no matter how costly, cannot substitute for the sacred special oil.	NO
[2]	Being sacred, the oil of anointing had to be stored in the Temple.	The spikenard was not sacred, and its source is unknown.	Sacred items were kept in the Temple, and were not offered for sale.	NO
[3]	A recognized prophet had to anoint a king.	A woman named Mary anointed Jesus.	Did a recognized prophet anoint Jesus?	NO
[4]	A special vial, or special horn, of the special anointing oil had to be used in anointing a king.	The spikenard ointment used on Jesus came from an alabaster box.	The Hebrew Bible never speaks of alabaster containers used for holding the oil of anointing.	NO
[5]	The oil of anointing was poured on the head only.	2 accounts - head only; 2 accounts - feet only.	Which version of the account is the true one?	NO
[6]	The anointing was a preparation for kingship (or high priesthood).	Jesus declared his anointing was to prepare him for burial.	Jesus never reigned as the monarch over any kingdom.	NO

This comparison demonstrates that the anointing of Jesus, as described in the New Testament, violates all the requirements for a valid anointing of royalty in Israel, as specified in the Hebrew Bible.

<u>Conclusion</u>: The "anointing" of Jesus, as described in the New Testament, violates all the requirements set forth in the Hebrew Bible, which makes him a false Messiah.

VIII. SUMMARY

Two important and interconnected issues were addressed in this essay. The first question concerns the Hebrew noun מָשִׁיחַ as it appears in Daniel 9:25-26:

⊙ *What is the correct translation of the Hebrew noun מָשִׁיחַ, which appears twice in the passage Daniel 9:25-26?*

According to most Christian translations, the term מָשִׁיחַ points to Jesus either by being translated as "[the] Messiah" or "the Anointed One". A word study on all 39 occurrences in the Hebrew Bible of the term מָשִׁיחַ in its various forms demonstrated that the correct translation is "an anointed one", a *generic* reference to two different individuals who were to appear on the scene at some future time, neither of whom had any connection to the promised Jewish Messiah. Recalling that the Hebrew Bible was the Scripture in force during the lifetime of Jesus, it is evident that neither instance of מָשִׁיחַ in Daniel 9:25-26 points to Jesus.

The second question concerns the validity of the so-called "anointing" of Jesus:

⊙ *Did the "anointing" of Jesus, as described in the New Testament, conform to the requirements specified in the Hebrew Bible?*

To help determine the validity of the "anointing" process, as described by the Four Gospels in the New Testament, a template for the anointing process of kings and high priests of Israel was developed from the accounts in the Hebrew Bible. The corresponding elements were then extracted from the accounts that describe the “anointing” of Jesus in the New Testament, and these were compared, element-by-element, against the template. The analysis demonstrated that, according to the specifications described in the Hebrew Bible, Jesus was not properly anointed.

THE ANTI-JEWISH NEW TESTAMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

Jewish people, who have read the New Testament throughout the history of Christianity, became well aware of the numerous passages of vicious and defamatory anti-Jewish polemic within it. On the other hand, Christians, in general, have been insensitive to the offensive nature of these texts and to the damage that their usage has done to the Jewish people throughout the Common Era. When the Emperor Constantine became a Christian in the fourth century C.E. and installed Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire, Jewish people became a primary target of persecution by "The Church".

Although the Holocaust, which caused the murderous annihilation of two-thirds of Europe's Jewish population, was in some ways different from previous historical acts of mass persecution and genocide of the Jewish people, it shared the motive of its precursors, the Crusades and Inquisitions, and the many pogroms and expulsions. Each of these events was fueled by anti-Semitism, the hatred of Jewish people, and was aimed at their murder and plunder. The Holocaust distinguished itself from the other events in the scope of its genocidal goals and the fact that it did not offer its victims the "option" of conversion to Christianity – there was no escape from death.

An increasing number of Christian scholars and clergy have concluded that the root of anti-Semitism in the Christian world community is ultimately found within the New Testament.

In his book, *Elder and Younger Brothers: The Encounter of Jews and Christians*, the late Professor A. Roy Eckhardt [former Professor of Religion at both Lehigh University (PA) and Oxford University (UK), and an ordained minister] asserts that the foundation of anti-Semitism and the responsibility for the Holocaust lie ultimately in the New Testament.[1] In another book, *Your People, My People: The Meeting of Jews and Christians*, Professor Eckhardt insists that Christian repentance must include a reexamination of basic theological attitudes toward Jewry and the New Testament in order to deal effectively with the problem of anti-Semitism and its prevention.[2] The general message scholars such as Professor Eckhardt are trying to convey is that, using the New Testament as its authoritative source, "The Church" has stereotyped the Jewish people as an icon of unredeemed humanity; they became an image of a blind, stubborn, carnal, and perverse people. This dehumanization is the vehicle that formed the psychological prerequisite to the atrocities that followed.

[1] A. Roy Eckhardt, *Elder and Younger Brothers: The Encounter of Jews and Christians*, Schocken Books (1967)
[2] A. Roy Eckhardt, *Your People, My People: The Meeting of Jews and Christians*, Crown Publishing Group (1974)

In one of his sermons, the Reverend Dr. Frank G. Kirkpatrick, Pastor of the Trinity Episcopal Church and Professor of Religion at Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut, describes how anti-Semitism grew out of a passage in the New Testament (Acts 13:44-52) that was to be read on that particular Sunday, as well as others like it.[3] This passage proclaims that the Jews have brought damnation on themselves by rejecting Jesus as their Messiah, a belief that has caused Jews throughout the centuries to be persecuted, exiled, and which eventually brought on the Holocaust.

Rather than speculate about and explore the reasons as to why the New Testament contains the racist defamatory anti-Jewish rhetoric, this essay considers some examples of such New Testament passages that appear in Christian **lectionaries**. Lectionaries are collections of Scriptural passages from Christian Bibles that are read during regular weekly Catholic and Protestant church services, and which are repeated on some cyclical schedule. As such, these lectionaries are widely used by many millions of Church-going Christians, and they are somewhat similar to Jewish prayer books, such as a ***Siddur***.

The material found in the lectionaries is, of course, only the "tip of the iceberg", but it suffices to demonstrate the plausibility of the assertion that the anti-Semitism among Christians is rooted in the New Testament.

II. ANTI-JEWISH POLEMIC IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Much of the information in this essay has been extracted from an article by Professor Norman A. Beck, a New Testament scholar and Professor of Theology and Classical Languages at Texas Lutheran University.[4] In his article, Professor Beck deals with texts found in six of the 27 books that comprise the New Testament, to which he refers as "**… the specific texts identified as most problematic …**" in some of his published works. Professor Beck identifies the offensive passages in the New Testament and indicates the instances in which all or portions of these texts are included in major lectionary series.

A. The Gospel of Matthew

The Gospel of Matthew contains approximately 90 verses of defamatory anti-Jewish polemic. These are shown in Table II.A-1 with passages that appear in various lectionary series shown in highlighted format.

[3] Sermon delivered on May 9, 2004, The Fifth Sunday of Easter, Year C, by The Reverend Dr. Frank G. Kirkpatrick: *Why Jews Don't Need Jesus* - http://www.trinityhartford.org/s050904.htm
[4] Norman A. Beck, *Anti-Jewish Polemic from our Christian Lectionaries: A Proposal* - http://www.jcrelations.net/en/displayItem.php?id=737; Professor Beck's credentials - http://www.jcrelations.net/en/displayItem.php?id=1102

Table II.A-1 – Anti-Jewish polemic in the Gospel of Matthew

Source	Description of Context	Lectionary Code*
3:7c	The Pharisees and Sadducees are called poisonous snakes	MLR
12:34a	The Pharisees are called evil poisonous snakes	---
15:3-9	Condemnation of the Pharisees for rejecting the commandments	---
15:12-14	The Pharisees are called blind guides leading the blind	---
16:6	Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees	---
19:3-9	The Pharisees are said to be hard-hearted	---
19:28	The disciples of Jesus will judge the twelve tribes of Israel	---
22:18c	The Pharisees are called hypocrites	HMLR
23:13-36	The scribes and Pharisees are repeatedly vilified as hypocrites	---
23:38	The house of Jerusalem is to be forsaken and desolate	---
26:59-68	The chief priests and council condemn Jesus as deserving death	MLR
27:1-26	The people demand that Jesus, not Barabbas, be crucified	MLR
27:62-66	The chief priests and Pharisees request a guard at Jesus' tomb	MLR
28:4	The guards tremble and become like dead when the angel appears	LR
28:11-15	The chief priest bribe the guards to lie about their actions	---

* Key to Lectionary Codes:

--- - Not included in a major lectionary series.
H - The *"Historic Pericopes"* used by the majority of Christians prior to 1969.[5]
M - The Roman Catholic *Lectionary for Mass* used during the 1980s.
L - Lutheran adaptations of the *Lectionary for Mass*, printed in the *Lutheran Book of Worship*.
R - *The Revised Common Lectionary*, 1992.

B. The Gospel of Mark

The Gospel of Mark contains approximately 40 verses of defamatory anti-Jewish polemic. These are shown in Table II.B-1, with passages that appear in various lectionary series shown in highlighted format.

Table II.B-1 – Anti-Jewish polemic in the Gospel of Mark

Source	Description of Context	Lectionary Code*
3:6	The Pharisees are said to have begun to plan to destroy Jesus	MR
7:6-13	Condemnation of the Pharisees for rejecting the commandments	MLR
8:15	Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees	---
10:2-5	The Pharisees are said to be hard-hearted	MLR
14:55-65	The chief priests and council condemn Jesus as deserving death	---
15:1-15	The crowd demands that Jesus, not Barabbas, be crucified	MLR

* Key to Lectionary Codes:

--- - Not included in a major lectionary series.
M - The Roman Catholic *Lectionary for Mass* used during the 1980s.
L - Lutheran adaptations of the *Lectionary for Mass*, printed in the *Lutheran Book of Worship*.
R - *The Revised Common Lectionary*, 1992.

[5] A pericope is a selection or extract from a book (*The Random House College Dictionary*, p. 987 [1975]).

C. The Gospel of Luke

The Gospel of Luke contains approximately 60 verses of defamatory anti-Jewish polemic. These are shown in Table II.C-1, with passages that appear in various lectionary series shown in highlighted format.

Table II.C-1 – Anti-Jewish polemic in the Gospel of Luke

Source	Description of Context	Lectionary Code*
3:7c	The multitudes are called poisonous snakes	LR
4:28-30	The members of the synagogue in Nazareth try to kill Jesus	MLR
7:30	The Pharisees are said to have rejected the purposes of God	---
11:39-54	The Pharisees and Torah scholars are repeatedly condemned	---
12:1b	Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy	---
13:14-17	The ruler of the synagogue is condemned as a hypocrite	---
13:35a	The house of Jerusalem is to be forsaken	LR
22:63-71	The chief priests and council condemn Jesus as deserving death	LR
23:1-25	The people demand that Jesus, not Barabbas, be crucified	LR

* Key to Lectionary Codes:
--- - Not included in a major lectionary series.
M - The Roman Catholic *Lectionary for Mass* used during the 1980s.
L - Lutheran adaptations of the *Lectionary for Mass*, printed in the *Lutheran Book of Worship*.
R - *The Revised Common Lectionary*, 1992.

D. The Gospel of John

The Gospel of John contains approximately 130 verses of defamatory anti-Jewish polemic. These are shown in Table II.D-1, with passages that appear in various lectionary series shown in highlighted format.

Table II.D-1 – Anti-Jewish polemic in the Gospel of John

Source	Description of Context	Lectionary Code*
5:16-18	The Jews are said to have persecuted Jesus and wanted to kill him	---
5:37b-47	It is said that God's word and God's love is not in the Jews	---
7:19-24	It is said that none of the Jews do (what is written in) the Torah	---
7:28d	It is said that the Jews do not know the One who has sent Jesus	---
8:13-28	It is said that the Pharisees know neither Jesus nor the Father	---
8:37-59	The Jews are said to be descendants of their father, the Devil	H
9:13-41	The Pharisees and other Jews are condemned as guilty	MLR
10:8	The Jews are said to be thieves and robbers	MLR
10:10a	The Jews are depicted as those who steal and kill and destroy	---
10:31-39	The Jews are said to have picked up stones to throw at Jesus	---
11:53	It is said that the Jews realized that they would have to kill Jesus	L
11:57	It is said that the chief priests and Pharisees wanted to seize Jesus	---
12:10	It is said that the chief priests planned to kill Lazarus and Jesus	---
12:36b-43	It is said that most Jews loved the praise of men more than of God	---
16:2-4	(The Jews who) kill Jesus' disciples will think they are serving God	H
18:28-32	The Jews are said to have demanded that Pilate sentence Jesus to death	HMLR

18:38b-40	The Jews are said to be demanding that Jesus, not Barabbas, be crucified	HMLR
19:4-16	The Jews are depicted as insisting to Pilate that Jesus be crucified	HMLR

* Key to Lectionary Codes:

--- - Not included in a major lectionary series.
H - The *"Historic Pericopes"* used by the majority of Christians prior to 1969.
M - The Roman Catholic *Lectionary for Mass* used during the 1980s.
L - Lutheran adaptations of the *Lectionary for Mass*, printed in the *Lutheran Book of Worship*.
R - *The Revised Common Lectionary*, 1992.

E. Acts of the Apostles

The Acts of the Apostles contains approximately 120 verses of defamatory anti-Jewish polemic. These are shown in Table II.E-1, with passages that appear in various lectionary series shown in highlighted format.

Table II.E-1 – Anti-Jewish polemic in the Book of Acts

Source	Description of Context	Lectionary Code*
2:23b	Peter tells the men of Israel that they crucified Jesus	MLR
2:36b	Again Peter tells the men of Israel that they crucified Jesus	MLR
3:13b-15a	Peter tells the men of Israel that they killed the originator of life	MLR
4:10a	Again Peter tells the men of Israel that they killed Jesus	MLR
5:30b	Peter tells the members of the Jewish council that they killed Jesus	MLR
6:11-14	Some Jews are said to have brought false accusations against Stephen	---
7:51-60	Stephen shown as condemning the Jews for betraying and killing Jesus	MLR
9:1-2	Paul is depicted as planning the arrest of disciples of Jesus	LR
9:23-25	Jews are said to have plotted to kill Paul	---
9:29b	Jewish Hellenists are also said to have tried to kill Paul	---
12:1-3a	It is said that the Jews were pleased when Herod killed James	---
12:3b-4	Herod is said to have seized Peter also to please the Jews	---
12:11	Peter is said to have realized that the Jews wanted to kill him	---
13:10-11	Paul is said to have condemned the Jew Elymas as a son of the Devil	---
13:28-29a	It is said that the Jews had asked Pilate to crucify Jesus	L
13:39d	It is said that Jews cannot be forgiven by means of the Torah	---
13:45-46	Jews are said to have spoken against Paul	ML
13:50-51	Jews are said to have encouraged persecution of Paul and Barnabas	ML
14:1-6	Many Jews opposing Paul and Barnabas and attempting to stone them	---
14:19-20	Jews are said to have stoned Paul, thinking that they had killed him	---
17:5-9	Jews are said to have incited a riot, looking for Paul and Silas	L
17:13	Jews are said to have stirred up turmoil against Paul	L
18:6	Paul said to have told the Jews, "Your blood will be on your own heads!"	---
18:12-17	Jews are said to have brought accusations against Paul	---
19:13-19	Jewish exorcists are shown to be condemned	---
21:27-36	Jews are depicted as seizing Paul and as trying to kill him	---
22:4-5	Paul says that when he was a Jew he had persecuted Christians	---

23:2-5	Paul is said to have condemned the chief priest for striking Paul	---
23:12-22	Jews are said to have plotted to eat nothing until they kill Paul	---
23:27-30	Paul is said to have been nearly killed by the Jews	---
24:9	The Jews are said to have accused Paul of many crimes	---
25:2-5	Jews are said to have plotted to kill Paul	---
25:7-11	Jews are said to have continued to bring accusations against Paul	---
25:15-21	Jews are said to have spoken repeatedly against Paul	---
25:24	All Jews are said to have shouted that Paul must be killed	---
26:21	The Jews are said to have seized Paul and tried to kill him	---
28:25-28	Paul is said to have condemned the Jews for never understanding God	---

* Key to Lectionary Codes:
--- - Not included in a major lectionary series.
M - The Roman Catholic *Lectionary for Mass* used during the 1980s.
L - Lutheran adaptations of the *Lectionary for Mass*, printed in the *Lutheran Book of Worship*.
R - *The Revised Common Lectionary*, 1992.

F. Paul's Letters & Epistles

Four verses, which constitute some of the most virulent anti-Jewish polemic present in the New Testament, are found within the seven letters written by Paul and the six Pseudo-Pauline and Deutero-Pauline epistles. These are shown in Table II.F-1.

Table II.F-1 – Anti-Jewish polemic from Paul's 1st Thessalonians

Source	Description of Context	Lectionary Code
2:13-16	Condemning the Jews for killing Jesus and the prophets, and celebrating the suffering of the Jews now that the "wrath of God" has come upon them	---

* Key to Lectionary Codes:
--- - Not included in a major lectionary series.

III. Observations and Conclusions

Some general observations may be drawn from the material presented above:

- **An ever-increasing number of Christian scholars and clergy agree that the New Testament contains defamatory anti-Jewish polemic**
- **Regardless of how it found its way into the New Testament, can such defamatory anti-Jewish language be the "breathed word of G-d", as many Christians believe the New Testament is, or the "inspired word of G-d", as many other Christians believe?**
- **This defamatory anti-Jewish polemic within the New Testament, without a doubt, served to fuel anti-Semitism and its resultant atrocities against the Jewish people throughout the history of Christianity**
- **Based on quantity alone, the Gospel of John appears to be the most anti-Jewish book in the New Testament, with Acts of the Apostles being a close second**

The following verses, which are from one of the passages in the Gospel of John listed among others in Table II.D-1 above [words in brackets were added for clarification; demonstrate this (highlighting added for emphasis):

> **John 8:44,47(KJV) – (44) Ye [Jews] are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye [Jews] will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.**
> **(47) He that is of God heareth God's words: ye [Jews] therefore hear them not, because ye [Jews] are not of God.**

- **Based on virulence and viciousness, some of Paul's Epistles and the Acts of the Apostles are the most inflammatory**

The one selection that may have been most responsible for the shedding of the blood of millions of innocent Jewish victims over the history of Christianity is from Paul's epistolary:

> **1 Thessalonians 2:13-16(KJV) – (13) For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. (14) For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: (15) Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: (16) Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.**

Table III-1 shows summary statistics on "**… the specific texts identified as most problematic …**" anti-Jewish polemic found in the major lectionary series, which were previously listed in the various tables in Section II.

Table III-1 – Anti-Jewish polemic in the New Testament and in Christian lectionaries

Source	# of passages	% of total	# of verses	% of total	% of NT
H – "Historic Pericopes"	6	7.0	48	10.5	0.6
M – RC Lectionary for Mass	23	26.7	146	31.9	1.8
L – Lutheran Lectionary for Mass	32	37.2	203	44.4	2.6
R – The Revised Common Lectionary	27	31.4	181	39.6	2.3
Number of distinct passages	35				
Passages in NT but not in lectionaries	51				
Total distinct passages	**86**				
Number of distinct verses			220		
Verses in NT but not in lectionaries			237		
Total distinct verses			**457**		**5.7**
Verses in the entire NT (KJV)			**7,959**		**100.0**

The data shown in Table III-1 lead to several additional observations:

- **Although the "historic pericope" tradition may not have deliberately selected blatantly anti-Jewish texts, the tradition did not demonstrate sensitivity to this issue**

While there may not have been a conscious attempt to select large numbers of defamatory anti-Jewish texts, it does not appear that there was any directed effort to avoid their usage either.

- **The Roman Catholic _Lectionary for Mass_ contains 23 selections that are blatantly anti-Jewish, as compared with the six in the "historic pericopes"**

  It seems that the liturgical specialists who developed the _Lectionary for Mass_ did not apply to their process of lectionary formation the principles and the spirit of *Nostra Aetate* (the Declaration on the Relationship of the Roman Catholic Church to Non-Christian Religions approved by the Vatican Council II - 10/28/65). They were particularly insensitive in their selections of virulently anti-Jewish texts from the _Acts of the Apostles_, which are to be read during the important Easter Season.

- **The _Lutheran Lectionary for Mass_, thereby making it the most anti-Jewish lectionary analyzed by Professor Beck**

  The Lutheran liturgists and the liturgists of other Christian denominations who took an interest in the (Roman Catholic) _Lectionary for Mass_ and, with various modifications, adopted it for their own use, yet appear to have had no concerns about its expanded use of defamatory anti-Jewish texts. The liturgists from the Lutheran tradition even included additional viciously and blatantly anti-Jewish selections in their _Lutheran Lectionary for Mass_.

- **_The Revised Common Lectionary_ also contains several additional blatantly anti-Jewish passages in its collection**

  Although this is the most modern (1992) Christian prayer books examined by Prof. Beck, it seems that the Christian liturgists who developed it demonstrated the same lack of sensitivity as did the others.

Considering the many millions of churchgoing Christians who have read these liturgical collections in their regular church services, it is not surprising that anti-Semitism has flourished within "The Church" and Christendom. The New Testament has been very effective in poisoning the minds of those who study it and accept it as "the breathed word of G-d", or as being "inspired by G-d".

IV. SUMMARY

The "Christian love for the Jew", of which so much is heard these days, turns out to be conditional in an overwhelming majority of cases. Christians, evangelical Christian missionaries in particular, view the Jews as a blind people in need of being made into "believers". When their missionary efforts fail, or when their deceptions are exposed, their professed love for the Jew quickly turns into hatred and contempt. Today's hand-clapping Jew-loving "new Christians" are evangelical Christian fundamentalists in disguise, some of whom even profess to be "Torah Observant". They teach the same anti-Semitic doctrines as have been taught by "The Church" throughout the Common Era. And while their tactics may have changed, their agenda and message remain the same.

The number of Jewish people who have been adversely affected, maimed, and murdered in the name of Jesus throughout the history of Christianity significantly

exceeds the six million who were massacred by the Nazis during the Holocaust. Hans Küng, a leading Catholic theologian, wrote:

> **"Nazi anti-Judaism was the work of godless, anti-Christian criminals. But it would not have been possible without the almost two thousand years' pre-history of 'Christian' anti-Judaism."[6]**

Yet, there are Jews who, for various reasons, have chosen to overlook this fact and have joined themselves to "The Church" with its built-in anti-Semitism. Shmuel Golding, who founded the Jerusalem Institute of Biblical Polemics and directed it for many years, summarized his opinion on this in the following way:

> **"Any Jew who can pay homage to the New Testament or allow himself to believe in it, is, in my opinion in the same category as a Jew who tries to justify Hitler's *Mein Kampf* or, as one who covers up for the deeds of the Nazis."[7]**

Jews who are approached by Christian missionaries should realize that, in order to be "loved" by these Christians, they will have to embrace and accept the New Testament as part of their Bible. Therefore, whether still a member of the Jewish community or one who has already joined a Hebrew-Christian organization, a Jew must consider the following two important questions:

- ? **Can the New Testament, which has led to the persecution and murder of millions of my Jewish ancestors throughout the Common Era, truly be the breathed word of G-d, or be inspired by Him?**
- ? **Am I ready to embrace this New Testament, which spouts hatred and lies against the Jewish people and, therefore, against me as a Jewish person, and accept it as part of my Bible?**

The desired outcome is, of course, that the honest and objective answers to these questions will motivate the affected individuals to return to traditional Judaism.

The analysis presented above, for which only Christian scholarly sources were used, can be summarized in terms of the following question and answer:

Question: What is the source of the common thread of anti-Semitism that connects the historical acts of persecution of the Jewish people?

Answer: The New Testament.

[6] Hans Küng, *On Being A Christian*, p. 169, Doubleday, Garden City NY, (1976)
[7] *Antisemitism in the New Testament* - http://www.messianic-racism.mcmail.com/ca/antisem/g2.htm

References for further study

[Selected material from some of these sources was used in preparing this essay]

Internet Websites:

The New Testament & Anti-Semitism (http://www.messianic-racism.mcmail.com/ca/antisem/idx.htm) - Several relevant articles may be found at this website.

Jewish-Christian Relations (http://www.jcrelations.net/) - This website contains a wealth of scholarly materials that deal with all aspects of Jewish-Christian relations.

Books:

Elder and Younger Brothers: The Encounter of Jews and Christians, by A. Roy Eckhardt, Schocken Books (1973)

Your People, My People: The Meeting of Christians and Jews, by A. Roy Eckhardt, Crown Publishing Group (1974); ISBN 0-81290-4125

Antisemitism in the New Testament , by Lillian C. Freudmann, University Press of America (1994); ISBN: 0819192953

Removing the Anti-Judaism from the New Testament, by Howard Clark Kee and Irvin J. Borowsky, American Interfaith Institute, Philadelphia, PA

"ARM OF THE LORD" – REVEALING THE TRUTH AND EXPOSING THE LIE![1]

I. INTRODUCTION

A common phrase in the Hebrew Bible, "arm of the Lord", a metaphor that normally would not conjure up thoughts of Christian "proof texts", has found its way into the Christian messianic paradigm via its application in Isaiah 53:1. Christian missionaries claim that the "arm of the Lord" is a reference to the (Christian) messiah, Jesus, as demonstrated by the following examples:

> **The arm of the Lord is the Messiah and Saviour not the Jewish people or the nation of Israel.[2]**
>
> **The Messiah, the arm of the LORD, is the subject of Psalm 110:2. [3]**
>
> **Here is the startling revelation -- "the arm of the LORD" is a he, a person! It is a figure for a Savior, a Redeemer! "The arm of the LORD" is none other than the humble Servant![4]**
>
> **Yeshua/Jesus is the ARM of the Lord (Isaiah 53:1-5, 51:1,5, 59:16, 62:1-2,8, 63:1,3-5, Luke 1:46,51, John 12:37-38).[5]**
>
> **Arm of the LORD is a phrase that is used exclusively to refer to the Messiah. The metaphor is used in no other context.[6]**

Some writers go even beyond making a seemingly authoritative statement concerning what the "arm of the Lord" represents; they falsely attribute this interpretation to important Jewish works:

> **There is no confusion of Messianic Nationalism in the Targum. The "arm of the Lord" is the person of the coming Messiah to the Jewish Targumists both before and after the birth of Jesus of Nazareth.[7]**

---

[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:
- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "h̲"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant

There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

[2] *DOES ISAIAH 53 SPEAK OF JESUS* - http://associate.com/ministry_files/Other_Electronic_Texts/Protestant/Isaiah.shtml

[3] *Psalms 110* - http://www.branchofdavid.org/teachings4.htm

[4] *WHO IS THE SERVANT OF ISAIAH 53?* - http://www.outreachtojudaism.net/whois.html

[5] *LINE UPON LINE, LESSON #19* - http://www.hebroots.com/lul19.html

[6] *Come Home and After Babylon Look for the Messiah* - http://www.ao.net/~fmoeller/isa50-52.htm

[7] *Isaiah 53 : The Suffering Messiah* - http://www.ao.net/~fmoeller/isa53.htm

Unfortunately, this writer fails to point out is that the *Targumim* (plural of *Targum*) were not literal translations of the Hebrew Bible into the Aramaic vernacular of the era. Rather, these were interpretive translations that often incorporated *Midrash* (homily), which is never used as a basis for prophecy nor taken as prophetic text.

As important a concept to Christianity as the "arm of the Lord" appears to be, its connection with the Christian "Old Testament" and, by implication, with the Hebrew Bible, requires careful scrutiny. Therefore, all direct references to the "arm of the Lord" in the Hebrew Bible, including the application in Isaiah 53:1,[8] are examined in this essay in order to determine whether there is scriptural support for this claim by Christian missionaries

II. Overview of the Christian Rationale

The identification of the "arm of the Lord" with the messiah of Christianity by Christian missionaries originates in their interpretation of Isaiah 53, that it is a prophecy about the (Christian) messiah. The author of the Gospel of John "quotes" Isaiah 53:1, and declares that Jesus has fulfilled this prophecy:

> **John 12:37-41(KJV) – (37) But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: (38) That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? (39) Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, (40) He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. (41) These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.**

The context here is that, although Jesus had performed many miracles before their eyes, as stated by Isaiah, the unbelief by the Jews in his divinity was caused by their blindness and the hardness of their hearts, which was, in and of itself, the fulfillment of yet another prophecy by Isaiah.[9]

In order to make this paradigm work, the applications of the "arm of the Lord" that appear throughout the Book of Isaiah, particularly those that occur within the *Fourth Servant Song* – at Isaiah 53:1,12, and nearby, are declared to be *de facto* references to Jesus, the messiah of Christianity. Another quote from a Christian website helps demonstrate this:

> **Who is the "Arm of the Lord"?**

[8] For a detailed analysis of "Isaiah 53" see *Who is the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53? Part I – The Jewish Interpretation, Valid or Not?* - *Who Is the* http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Isa53JP.pdf and *Who Is the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53? Part II - The Christian Interpretation, Valid or Not?* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Isa53CP.pdf

[9] In annotated Christian Bibles, John 12:40 points back to Isaiah 6:10. This is the source of the common and familiar charge by frustrated Christian missionaries that "Jews are blind, deaf, and hard-hearted, and that is why they reject Jesus".

What is the identity of the person described in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah? The identity is revealed in the first verse of the 53rd chapter. He is called the "Arm of the Lord", and the verse asks, "To whom is He revealed?" The term or description of the LORD'S arm is personified in a number of places. However, here in the 52nd and 53rd chapter we see that "Arm of the LORD" will suffer, be beaten, and killed but come back to life.

An arm is extension of the self. Our arms allow us to interact in the world. Isaiah is revealing to us information about the nature of the "Suffering Servant" that could easily be overlooked. The servant is none other then God himself who extends Himself into the world in the Body of man to intercede on the behalf of man because there is no alternative.[10]

By inference, all other occurrences of this anthropomorphism in the Christian "Old Testament" become synonymous with Jesus, who also is divine by virtue of being part of the Christian godhead.

III. A REVIEW OF (ALMOST ALL) REFERENCES IN THE HEBREW BIBLE TO GOD'S "ARM"

The Hebrew noun זְרוֹעַ (***z'RO'a***), **arm**, appears on 38 occasions in the Hebrew Bible as an explicit references to God's "Arm". All but two of these verses are listed below. The two remaining passages appear in a single verse, Isaiah 51:5, which is a special case to be discussed later in the analysis.

To facilitate the analysis, the 36 verses are separated into seven groups, each of which reflects a common purpose or function of God's "Arm":

A. Role in the deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt

1. **Exodus 6:6 - Therefore, say to the children of Israel, 'I am the Lord, and I will take you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will save you from their labor, and I will redeem you with an outstretched Arm and with great judgments.**
2. **Deuteronomy 4:34 - Or has any god performed miracles to come and take him a nation from the midst of a[nother] nation, with trials, with signs, and with wonders, and with war and with a strong hand, and with an outstretched Arm, and with great awesome deeds, as all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?**
3. **Deuteronomy 5:15 - And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord your God took you out from there with a strong hand and with an outstretched Arm; therefore, the Lord, your God, commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.**
4. **Deuteronomy 7:19 - The great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, the wonders, the mighty hand, and the outstretched Arm with which the Lord, your God, brought you out; so will the Lord, Your God, do to all the peoples you fear.**
5. **Deuteronomy 9:29 - But they are Your people and Your inheritance, which You brought out with Your great strength and with Your outstretched Arm.**
6. **Deuteronomy 26:8 - And the Lord brought us out from Egypt with a strong hand and with an outstretched Arm, with great awe, and with signs and wonders.**

[10] Is the Messiah God? - http://www.truthnet.org/Christianity/Apologetics/ismessiahgod13/

7. **2 Kings 17:36 - Only the Lord Who brought you up from the land of Egypt with great might and with an outstretched Arm, Him shall you fear, and to Him shall you prostrate yourselves and to Him shall you slaughter sacrifices.**
8. **Isaiah 51:9 – Awaken, awaken, dress yourself with strength, O Arm of the Lord, awaken, awaken like days of old, generations of yore; are you not the one that hewed Rahav[11] and slew the sea monster?**
9. **Isaiah 63:12 – He led at Moses' right the Arm of His glory, splitting the water before them to make for Himself an everlasting name.**
10. **Psalms 77:16 - You redeemed Your people with Your Arm, the sons of Jacob and Joseph forever.**
11. **Psalms 136:12 - With a strong hand and with an outstretched Arm, for His kindness is eternal.**

B. Role in protecting Israel from her enemies and helping her

1. **Exodus 15:16 - May dread and fright fall upon them; with the Arm of Your greatness may they become as still as a stone, until Your people pass through, O Lord, until this nation that You have acquired passes through.**
2. **Isaiah 40:10 - Behold the Lord God shall come with a strong [hand], and His Arm rules for Him; behold His reward is with Him, and His recompense is before Him.**
3. **Isaiah 62:8 - The Lord swore by His right hand and by the Arm of His strength; I will no longer give your grain to your enemies, and foreigners shall no longer drink your wine for which you have toiled.**
4. **Isaiah 63:5 – And I looked and there was no one helping, and I was astounded and there was no one supporting, and My Arm saved for Me, and My fury-that supported Me.**
5. **Psalms 44:4 - For not by their sword did they inherit the land, neither did their arm save them, but Your right hand and Your Arm and the light of Your countenance, for You favored them.**
6. **Psalms 79:11 - May the cry of the prisoner come before You; according to the greatness of Your Arm, set free those condemned to die.**

C. Role in God's accomplishments and attributes

1. **Deuteronomy 11:2 - And you shall know this day; that [I speak] not with your children, who did not know and who did not see the instructions of the Lord, your God, His greatness, His mighty hand, and His outstretched Arm.**
2. **Jeremiah 27:5 - I made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the face of the earth, with My great strength and with My outstretched Arm, and I gave it to him that pleased Me.**
3. **Jeremiah 32:17 - "Alas! Lord God, behold, You have made the heaven and the earth by Your great power and Your outstretched Arm, and nothing is hidden from You.**
4. **Psalms 71:18 - And even until old age and hoary hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I tell [of] Your Arm [might] to the generation, to everyone who comes -Your might.**
5. **Psalms 89:14 - You have an Arm with might; Your hand is mighty, Your right hand is high.**

[11] The name Rahav (רָהָב [***RAhav***]) is a metaphor for Egypt. (See also Psalms 87:4 & 89:11.)

6. **Psalms 98:1 - A song. Sing to the Lord a new song, for He performed wonders; His right hand and His holy Arm have saved Him.**

D. Role in the gathering, judgment, and future redemption of Israel

1. **Isaiah 59:16 - And He saw that there was no man, and He was astounded for there was no intercessor, and His Arm saved for Him, and His righteousness, that supported Him.**
2. **Isaiah 52:10 - The Lord has revealed His holy Arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.**
3. **Isaiah 53:1 - Who would have believed our report, and to whom was the Arm of the Lord revealed?**
4. **Ezekiel 20:33 – As I live, says the Lord God, surely with a strong hand and with an outstretched Arm and with poured out fury, will I reign over you.**
5. **Ezekiel 20:34 - And I shall take you out of the peoples, and I shall gather you from the lands in which you were scattered, with a strong hand and with an outstretched Arm and with poured out fury.**

E. Role in dealing with individual personalities

1. **Isaiah 48:14 - All of you, gather and hearken, who of them told these? The Lord loves him, who shall do His work in Babylon and [show] His Arm [upon the] Chaldeans.** [God is speaking of Cyrus, the agent appointed to bring Israel back to the Holy Land (see Isaiah 45:1).]
2. **Jeremiah 21:5 - And I will wage war with you with an outstretched hand and with a strong Arm, and with anger and with fury and with great wrath.** [God is speaking to Zedekiah, the last King of Judah.]
3. **Psalms 89:22 – With whom My hand will be established, even My Arm will strengthen him.** [God is speaking of King David and his future dynasty.]
4. **Job 40:9 - Do you have an Arm like God, or do you thunder like Him with [your] voice?** [God is speaking to Job.]

F. Role in helping to draw the nations to God

1. **1 Kings 8:42 - For they shall hear of Your great Name, and of Your mighty hand, and of Your outstretched Arm, and will come and pray toward this house.**
2. **2 Chronicles 6:32 - And also to the stranger, who is not of Your people Israel, but will come from a distant land because of Your great name, Your strong hand, and Your outstretched Arm, and they will come and pray toward this House.**

G. Role in subduing, defeating, and subjugating God's enemies

1. **Isaiah 30:30 - And the Lord shall make heard the glory of His voice, and the laying down of His Arm shall He show, with furious anger and a flame of consuming fire, bursting and storming rain, and hailstones.**
2. **Psalms 89:11 - You crushed Rahav like one slain; with the Arm of Your might You scattered Your enemies.**

IV. ANALYSIS OF THE REFERENCES IN THE HEBREW BIBLE TO THE "ARM OF THE LORD"

The first step in analyzing these 36 references to the "arm of the Lord" was their grouping according to common themes. The next step is to look for a common thread that connects the various categories.

The most striking common theme these seven groups share is that all shown references to the "arm of the Lord" point to God, the Creator, taking some form of direct action and executing acts of vindication, either on behalf of or against some entity and, generally, with Israel somewhere in the picture. This is quite similar to instances of other anthropomorphisms found in the Hebrew Bible, such as God's Hand, and God's Finger. Therefore, the references to God's Arm in the 36 examples cited above allude to both the physical and spiritual redemption (deliverance and salvation) of Israel from the hands of oppressors.

With this common theme in mind, look back at the list of 36 references to the "arm of the Lord" and ask yourself the following questions: *Can the messiah of Christianity be unambiguously identified with this common theme that connects all the instances of this symbolism, or with each and every application of it in the Hebrew Bible? Can one simply substitute the term "messiah" in each case and maintain the original context? Could it be that this paradigm foisted on Christianity by the author of the Gospel of John?*[12]

The coup de grâce

As noted earlier, there are two additional references in the Hebrew Bible to the "arm of the Lord", both of which occur in the same verse:

> **Isaiah 51:5 – My righteousness is near, My salvation has gone forth, and My Arms shall judge peoples; islands shall wait for Me, and on My Arm shall they trust.**

Take note of the occurrence of the reference by God to "My Arms" (plural) first, with which He will judge nations, and then a reference to "My Arm" (singular), in which the nations will trust. The KJV renders of this verse as follows:

> **Isaiah 51:5(KJV) - My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust.**
> [Similar renditions are also found in the AMP, ASV, DARBY, ESV, KJ21, NASB, NKJV, RSV, and YLT Bibles.][13]

This translation is consistent with the Jewish translation from the Hebrew.

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[12] God's Arm is mentioned on two other occasions in the New Testament, at Luke 1:51, where Mary "quotes" Psalms 98:1, but long before Jesus was born, and at Acts 13:17, where Paul, on his first missionary journey, addresses a crowd and refers to the Exodus from Egypt.

[13] AMP – Amplified Bible; ASV – American Standard Version; DARBY – Darby Translation; ESV – English Standard Version; KJ21 – 21st Century King James Version; NASB – New American Standard Bible; NKJV – New King James Version; NRSV – New Revised Standard Version; RSV – Revised Standard Version; YLT – Young's Literal Translation.

The Christian missionaries now face the following dilemma: *If the "arm of the Lord" is a metaphor for Jesus, what does the use of the plural "arms" mean? Does this imply that Jesus has a "partner messiah"? Which one of the "arms" represents Jesus?*

A survey of various Christian Bibles available on the Internet indicates that many follow in the footsteps of the KJV, and have both the plural "my arms" and the singular "my arm", respectively, in their renditions of this verse. Other Christian translations deal with this verse in different ways. For example, the New International Version (NIV) Bible translation is:

> **Isaiah 51:5(NIV) - My righteousness draws near speedily, my salvation is on the way, and my arm will bring justice to the nations. The islands will look to me and wait in hope for my arm.** [See also the NIRV and NIV-UK Bibles.][14]

The NIV and its related editions "solve" the problem by simply replacing the plural "my arms" with the singular "my arm". *Who authorized the NIV translators to change Isaiah's divinely inspired words?*

The forced equation of the "arm of the Lord" with Jesus at John 12:38, which was designed to establish a major building block of the Christian messianic paradigm, has created a major stumbling block to it instead.

V. SUMMARY

Is the claim that the "arm of the Lord" is synonymous with the messiah valid? Christian missionaries, who accept the New Testament as the "word of God", are obligated to accept the statement therein that Jesus, the messiah of Christianity, is the "arm of the Lord". However, as the analysis has shown, this equation cannot be made for at least the following two reasons:

- **The context of the respective passages in the Hebrew Bible does not support it**
- **It creates serious problems for the Christian messianic paradigm**

According to the Hebrew Bible, the "arm of the Lord", as well as the hand and finger of the Lord, are anthropomorphic metaphors that symbolize direct actions taken by God. The promised Jewish Messiah, מָשִׁיחַ, (***mashi'ah***), is expected to complete the tasks spelled out in the messianic agenda that is found in the Hebrew Bible, and he will surely have some help from God, but he is not symbolized by any anthropomorphism of God's limbs. The Hebrew Bible is very clear about the fact that מָשִׁיחַ will be a flesh and blood human being, a direct descendant of King David, not someone who will be a manifestation of God and worshipped.

[14] NIRV – New International Reader's Version; NIV-UK – New International Version - UK.

"O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM … (OF GALILEE)"[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

Composed by Phillips Brooks in 1867 and scored by Lewis H. Redner in 1868 [the "St. Louis" version], "O Little Town of Bethlehem" has become one of the most popular and familiar Christmas carols. Its subject, the city of Bethlehem (of Judea), venerated by Christians as the birthplace of Jesus, the Messiah of Christianity, is located about six miles (approximately 10 kilometers) south of Jerusalem and about 70 miles (approximately 110 kilometers) south of Nazareth. The belief that Bethlehem is the birthplace of Jesus has its origin in a verse from the Christian "Old Testament", claimed to be a "messianic prophecy" that was fulfilled by Jesus, as described in the New Testament.[2]

Two distinct geographical places named בֵּית לֶחֶם (***BEIT LEhem***), **Bethlehem**, are mentioned in the Hebrew Bible: One, the familiar city that is located in the territory of the Tribe of Judah, is referenced on 40 occasions. The other, a more obscure one referenced only once (as one of the 12 named cities in the territory of the Tribe of Zebulun), is located in the lower Galilee some four miles (approximately 7 kilometers) northwest of Nazareth:[3]

> **Joshua 19:15 - And Kattath, and Nahallal, and Shimron, and Idalah, and Bethlehem; twelve cities with their villages.**

While the predominant belief among Christians is that Bethlehem (of Judea) is the birthplace of Jesus, the existence of these two cities that bear the same Hebrew name בֵּית לֶחֶם – the one in Judea near Jerusalem, and the other in the Galilee near Nazareth – combined with two different birth narratives in the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel Luke along with a somewhat odd account in the Gospel of

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:
- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "h"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

[2] The alleged "proof text", Micah 5:1[2 in Christian bibles], was analyzed in the essay *Micah 5:1[2] - Bethlehem: The Messiah's Birthplace?* – http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Micah5_1.pdf

[3] See Appendix A for a map that shows the locations of Bethlehem of Galilee, Nazareth, and Bethlehem of Judea.

John, has led several scholars, as far back as the late 19th century of the Common Era, to suggest the possibility that Bethlehem (of Galilee) is the more likely place where Jesus was born.[4] However, without the benefit of physical evidence to support this idea, such as data from archaeological excavations, this remained just a theory for well over 100 years.

The significant status of Bethlehem of Judea has motivated extensive archeological exploration of it and the surrounding area throughout the 20th century, while its lesser known namesake, Bethlehem (of Galilee), was essentially ignored until recent times, when Aviram Oshri, a senior archaeologist with the Israeli Antiquities Authority, and his team conducted archaeological salvage excavations in and around Bethlehem (of Galilee) from 1992 to 2003. Oshri first reported on his work in late 2004 at a conference held in Israel,[5] and a year later published a full account of his findings in the journal *Archaeology*.[6]

In this essay, the available evidence from the archaeological excavations at both Bethlehem of Judea and Bethlehem of Galilee is reviewed vis-à-vis the accounts found in the New Testament.

II. Relevant Accounts in the New Testament

As noted above, the New Testament includes two accounts of the birth of Jesus – one in the Gospel of Matthew and the other in the Gospel of Luke – both of which place this event in Bethlehem of Judea, which, according to Christian belief, is a prerequisite for being the Messiah. The Gospel of John contains a passage that describes a division of opinions among the people of the land at the time of Jesus concerning his place of birth.

A. The Nativity (& related events) according to the Gospel of Matthew

According to the account in the Gospel of Matthew, Joseph and Mary lived in Bethlehem of Judea when Jesus was born:

> **Matthew 2:1-6(KJV) - Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, (2) Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. (3) When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. (4) And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. (5) And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by**

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[4] See, for example, Bruce Chilton, *Rabbi Jesus – An Intimate Biography*, pp. 7-9, 294, An Image Book by Doubleday (2002). Another view, prevalent among academics, exemplified by John P. Meier of the University of Notre Dame., questions the belief that Bethlehem of Judea is the birthplace of Jesus, and holds that Nazareth is his birthplace. This latter theory is not addressed in the present essay.
[5] The original article (in Hebrew) appears on the web-site of the Israeli Antiquities Authority at - http://www.antiquities.org.il/article_Item_ido.asp?sec_id=17&sub_subj_id=184&id=273#as
[6] Aviram Oshri, "*Where Was Jesus Born?*", *Archaeology*, Volume 58, No. 6, Nov/Dec 2005, pp. 42-45. [Abstract of article is available at - http://www.archaeology.org/0511/abstracts/jesus.html]

the prophet, (6) And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. [See Footnote 2 for a link to an analysis of v. 6]

Later on in the story, after an unsuccessful attempt to find and bring to him this child, an enraged Herod, intent on mitigating the realization of what he was told, ordered the killing of Bethlehem's children who were two years old and younger. During this time, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and instructed him to flee with his family to Egypt and stay there till he is told to return. Joseph did as he was told:

Matthew 2:13(KJV) – When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

Following Herod's death, while Joseph and his family were still in Egypt, an angel again appeared to Joseph in a dream and instructed him to take his family back to the Land of Israel. However, rather than return to Bethlehem of Judea, where Herod's son Herod Archelaus, a very cruel individual, was the ruler, Joseph decided to settle in Nazareth, in the Galilee, which was under the rule of Herod Antipas, the brother of Herod Archelaus, who was apparently a more reasonable regional leader than his brother:

Matthew 2:21-23(KJV) - And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. (22) But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: (23) And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

Summary: The account in the Gospel of Matthew starts with the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem of Judea, includes a sojourn in Egypt, and ends with Joseph, Mary, and Jesus settling in Nazareth, which is where Jesus grew up and which became his hometown.

B. The Nativity (& related events) according to the Gospel of Luke

The author of the Gospel of Luke also identifies Bethlehem of Judea as the birthplace of Jesus, but he paints a rather different scenario of the Nativity and the circumstances and events around it.

Joseph and his very pregnant wife, Mary, left Nazareth and traveled to Bethlehem of Judea, Joseph's hometown, to be counted in a census that was ordered by the ruling Roman authorities for the purpose of taxation:

Luke 2:4-5(KJV) – (4) And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) (5) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

Soon after the couple's arrival in Bethlehem of Judea, Mary gave birth to Jesus:

Luke 2:6-7(KJV) – (6) And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. (7) And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

A group of shepherds, who were tending to their flocks in the fields of Judea, rushed to Bethlehem to see this special and holy child about whom they heard from a host of angels:

Luke 2:15-16(KJV) – (15) And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. (16) And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

After all required rituals were completed, Joseph and Mary returned to their residence in Nazareth, bringing their newborn son with them:

Luke 2:39-40(KJV) – (39) And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. (40) And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

Summary: The account in the Gospel of Luke has Jesus being born in Bethlehem of Judea and growing up in Nazareth. However, it starts out with Joseph and Mary, late in her pregnancy, traveling to Bethlehem, where she gives birth to Jesus, and where a group of shepherds who heard about the birth came to see the child. The account ends with the three of them returning to live in Nazareth after all required rituals following the birth were completed.

Sidebar Note: It is interesting to note how the author of the Gospel of Luke carefully points out that the relevant commandments in the Law of Moses were being followed:

- **Circumcision of a male child on the eighth day following his birth,**

  Luke 2:21(KJV) – And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. [See Genesis 17:12; Leviticus 12:3]

- **Ritual purification of the birthing mother, her sacrificial offering, and dedication of the firstborn to God:**

  Luke 2:22-24(KJV) – And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; (23) (As it is written in the law of the LORD, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) (24) And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons. [See Leviticus 12:6-8 in relation to verses 22&24; Exodus 13:2,12; Numbers 3:13, 8:17 in relation to verse 23]

This account, in which the author makes note of how carefully “the Law of the LORD” [a common reference to Torah, the Mosaic Law, in Christian bibles] was observed by people, is not unique in the Gospel of Luke. About Zacharias and his wife, Elizabeth [Mary’s cousin], he wrote:

Luke 1:6(KJV) - And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the

commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

C. The account in the Gospel of John

The author of the Gospel of John does not provide an account of the Nativity. Instead, he describes a situation in which the legitimacy of the claim that Jesus is the Messiah was put into question:

> **<u>John 7:41-43(KJV)</u> – (40) Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. (41) Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? (42) Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? (43) So there was a division among the people because of him.** [See Footnote 2 with regard to v. 42]

It seems that a group of people believed that Jesus was born in the Galilee, not in Bethlehem. Consequently, they questioned his legitimacy as Messiah by referring to the verse Micah 5:2 in the Christian "Old Testament" [Micah 5:1 in the Hebrew Bible] which, according to the Christian interpretation, prophesies that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem, King David's place of birth, and also that he will be of King David's seed.

This difference of opinions still exists today among New Testament scholars, many of whom believe that Jesus was born in Nazareth and not in Bethlehem.[7]

D. What about the Gospel of Mark?

Although the Gospel of Mark is the second book in the New Testament, most scholars agree that it predates the Gospel of Matthew – the first book in the New Testament – the former being dated in the 65-80 C.E. range. Yet, the author of the Gospel of Mark does not provide to his readers with an account of the birth of Jesus, such as are found in the Gospels of Matthew (Matthew 1:18-2:12) and Luke (Luke 2:1-20).

An account of the Nativity is not the only element in the life of Jesus that is missing from the Gospel of Mark. There is also no mention of other events relating to Jesus from the time preceding his ministry. For example, there is no account of the Herod's massacre of infants (Matthew 2:16), no childhood stories (Luke 2:41-52), no genealogy is given (Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38), nor is there even a single reference to Bethlehem (Matthew 2:1,5,6,8,16; Luke 2:1,4,15; John 7:42).

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[7] Some of the leading proponents of this view are: Dr. Marcus Borg, Hundere Distinguished Professor of Religion & Culture, Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR, the late Dr. Robert W. Funk, who was Chairman, Graduate Department of Religion, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN, Fr. John P. Meier, Professor of New Testament, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN, and Dr. Steve Mason, Professor of Humanities & Ancient History, York University, Toronto, Canada.

These discrepancies and inconsistencies, coupled with yet another anomaly, the references to ***Jesus of Nazareth*** in the Four Gospels (Matthew 26:71; Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34, 18:37; John 1:45), have fuelled the speculations by many scholars about the real birthplace of Jesus. It is, therefore, prudent to assess the existing verifiable tangible evidence for possible clues to help resolve the issue of his birthplace.

III. Current Archaeological Evidence

Whereas places such as Bethlehem of Judea, Capernaum, Jerusalem, and Nazareth, due to their significance to Christianity, have been extensively investigated by archaeologists for well over 100 years, the more obscure Bethlehem of Galilee, however, was not thoroughly explored until the 1990s. Yet, the archaeological evidence unearthed in the exploration of the Galilean Bethlehem may have a significant impact on some aspects of the story of Christianity.

A. The archaeological record from excavations in Bethlehem of Judea and its vicinity

Archaeological excavations in and around Bethlehem of Judea in the 1920s and 1930s, while the region was under the jurisdiction of the British Mandate, and following the Six-Day War in 1967, when the region was under the rule of Israel, yielded the following significant findings:

✡ Archaeological evidence of Jewish origin

- **Iron Age pottery** (Near Eastern Iron Age: ~1000 – 586 B.C.E.)

  These shards of clay vessels were collected from the yards of excavated houses located in the area of a hill to the east of the Church of the Nativity.

✞ Archaeological evidence of Christian origin

- **The fourth century C.E. Church of the Nativity and associated buildings from the Byzantine and Medieval [Middle Ages] periods** (Byzantine period: 324 – 638 C.E.; Medieval period: ~500 – ~1450 C.E.)

  The original structure was built by Emperor Constantine's mother in the 4th century C.E., and the present structure was rebuilt by Emperor Justinian during the 4th decade of the 6th century C.E.

As important as real evidence is in any research endeavor, it is possible that the _absence of evidence_ could also provide significant insight into a study. This is the case with the archaeological record for Bethlehem of Judea, from which the following _evidence is conspicuously absent_:

✡ "Missing" archaeological evidence of Jewish origin

- **Antiquities from the Herodian period** (37 B.C.E. – 70 C.E.)

  Other than the single exception of a Jordanian publication from the 1950s, which mentions pottery shards from the Herodian period found in a corner of the Church of the Nativity, the whereabouts of which are unknown, there are no

reported findings of antiquities from that period – positive evidence that would connect Bethlehem of Judea to the time during which Jesus was born.

- **A water tower at the point where a Herodian aqueduct reaches Bethlehem of Judea**

  An aqueduct, designed by the Roman architect Viturvius (90 – 20 B.C.E.) and believed to have been built by Herod the Great (37 – 4 B.C.E.) for supplying Jerusalem with water from Solomon's Pools, passes by Bethlehem of Judea.[8] According to the specifications of Viturvius, at any point along an aqueduct where it reaches a city, a water tower had to be built, and it had to be connected to a reservoir that consisted of three pools.[9] The Herodian aqueduct, which connected Jerusalem with Solomon's Pools, does not have such a tower and reservoir at the location where it reaches Bethlehem of Judea.

The existing archaeological evidence indicates that Bethlehem of Judea was populated (by Jews) in Biblical times through the end of the (Near Eastern) Iron Age and, then, (by Christians) during the Byzantine period. No archaeological evidence exists that would tie Bethlehem of Judea to the time span between these two eras, and in particular to the Herodian period during which Jesus lived.

B. The Archaeological record from excavations in Bethlehem of Galilee and its vicinity

As noted above, Bethlehem of Galilee is mentioned once in the Hebrew Bible. Other references to it, albeit post biblical, are found on a list of priestly guards who moved to the Galilee following the destruction of the Second Temple, in the Jerusalem Talmud,[10] and in the Onomasticon of Eusebius of Caesarea.[11]

A mid-19th century survey of the Galilee by the French archaeologist Victor Gran identified two ruins at the site of Bethlehem of Galilee – a synagogue and a church.[12] The synagogue has not yet been positively identified, but is believed to

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[8] Three large water reservoirs located approximately three miles (~5 kilometers) southwest of Bethlehem, which are fed by several springs and rainwater. These water storage facilities appear to be partly excavated from the existing rock and partly constructed, and are believed to have been built by Herod the Great for supplying water to Herodium [also known as Herodion], the fortress that housed his palace, and to Jerusalem.

[9] Ronny Reich, *Viturvius*, Dvir Publishers (1997).

[10] The Jerusalem Talmud, Tractate Megillah, Folio 2b, contains a reference to "Bethlehem of Tyre" [בֵּית לֶחֶם הַצּוֹרִיָּה (***BEIT LEhem ha'tsoriYAH***)], an indication that the territory was under the rule of Tyre at some time in history.

[11] The *Onomasticon* - http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/eusebius_onomasticon_02_trans.htm - a late 4th-early-5th century C.E. list of settled places, includes a "Bethleem", which Eusebius describes this way: "**Bethleem[248]. [In] lot of [tribe of] Zabulon. There is another one of Juda. (Distinct from the other named Bethleem of Juda.)**". Note #248 in the appendix provides additional information: "**Bethleem. Joshua 19:15; K. 52:16; L. 249:37. A simple tribal listing plus a note to distinguish it from the more renowned Bethleem of Iouda (K. 42:10). The note may be an addition. This other Bethleem according to Jerome Commentary on Matthew 2:5 is in Galilaea.**" [L. and K. are references to Paul de Lagarde's publication of the Onomasticon in 1870 and to Erich Klostermann's republication of it in 1904, respectively.]

[12] Other than in Oshri's original report (Footnote 5), no information is available on this work.

be located in a specific area that has not yet been excavated. The church, later dated to be from the Byzantine period, was originally exposed in 1965 during the construction of a highway from Nazareth to Bethlehem of Galilee, in the process of which its main hall was, unfortunately, destroyed.

The 11-year long archaeological excavation project by Aviram Oshri's team in and around Bethlehem of Galilee has, thus far, yielded the following significant findings:[13]

✡ Archaeological evidence of Jewish origin

- **A Jewish workshop from the Herodian period**

  In this production facility, which had mosaic floors, stone vessels used for Jewish purification rituals were manufactured. In a nearby pit remnants of such vessels were found. Oshri describes this as "a very rare find in the Galilee in this period."

- **A Herodian period residential area**

  The residential area, located in an adjacent area to where the workshop was found, contained shards of ceramic and stone vessels that would have been in use by a Jewish population.

✞ Archaeological evidence of Christian origin

- **A sixth century C.E. church**

  As the main hall of the church was destroyed, mosaic floors were revealed, which were decorated with medallions of vines, with figures of animals, and with plant motifs. The baptismal font was also discovered.

- **A sixth century C.E. monastery**

  This structure, located near the church, contained an oil press, an underground vault that contained candles with cross decorations, and a large amount of pig bones.

- **A hotel/inn from the Byzantine period**

  This is a large two-story public building with feeding troughs for horses on the ground floor and with fully furnished accommodations and facilities on the upper story, including a lavish mosaic floor.

- **A Byzantine period protective wall around the city**

  This fortification wall is three feet thick and has ramparts and towers along its perimeter. It has been dated to the sixth-seventh century C.E., prior to the Persian invasion of 614 C.E.

All three buildings noted above show signs of being violently destroyed during the Persian invasion of the region in 614 C.E.

[13] Although Oshri's article in *Archaeology* (see Footnote 6) is his final report on the project he was commissioned to carry out, he makes the following comment: "**My government-funded salvage excavations are over, but I am trying to find support to continue the project, as there is still so much left at the site to discover and understand.**" (p. 45). In other words, there is still much work to be done there.

According to Aviram Oshri, the protective wall around the city has special significance – it indicates that the residents of the small city felt threatened by the predominantly Jewish population in the Galilee of the time. Following the failed Bar-Kochba revolt against Rome, the Emperor Hadrian expelled the Jews from Jerusalem in 135 C.E., a situation that remained unchanged through the end of the Byzantine period (638 C.E.), when the Muslims, led by Caliph Omar, captured Jerusalem and allowed the Jews to return. Many of Jerusalem's expelled residents wound up in the Galilee, and, as Oshri posits in the form of a question:

> **"Is it possible that, because of the hostility the Jews had toward Christians in this period, the residents of Bethlehem of Galilee fortified the site which they held to be the birthplace of the Christian Messiah?"[14]**

E. More recent history of Bethlehem of Galilee

Oshri makes mention of available archaeological evidence that confirms the description, in some unreferenced Medieval texts, of an Eastern Christian community that was living in Bethlehem of Galilee. He also states that it is not clear at this time whether a Christian community existed there during the bulk of the Ottoman period (1517 – 1917).

This situation changed at the beginning of the 20th century when, in 1906, a group of German missionaries from the Temple Society, known as the Templars – who considered themselves as the chosen people whose mission was to build the Kingdom of God in the Holy Land - founded the modern village of בֵּית לֶחֶם הַגְּלִילִית (***BEIT LEhem ha'gliLIT***), Bethlehem of (the) Galilee.[15]

The Templars resided there until 1939, when the police authorities of the British Mandate of Palestine rounded them up for their open support of the Third Reich – they even operated a Nazi youth movement in Bethlehem of Galilee – and interned them there for a time, then gave them the choice of returning to Germany or being deported most to Australia. Most decided on Australia, while those who were returned to Germany were exchanged for 500 Jewish prisoners.

Bethlehem of Galilee was captured by the ***Haganah*** on April 17, 1947, at which time the remaining Templar settlers were deported to Australia, and Israeli farmers moved in.[16] The Templars left no visible Christian presence when they departed – not even church buildings – and the only sign of their presence is a distinctive architectural style, which is still reflected in the attractive modern stone

[14] Taken from p. 45 of Oshri's article in Archaeology referenced in Footnote 6.
[15] The Templars first arrived in the Ottoman-controlled land of Palestine in the mid-1880s, and started to build communities within close proximity to the seaport of Haifa, in Jaffa, in an area that eventually was included in Tel Aviv, and in Jerusalem. Their total population in the land never exceeded 2,000.
[16] The ***Haganah*** (the Hebrew term for **defense**), was a Jewish paramilitary organization that operated in Palestine during the British Mandate of Palestine from 1920 until the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, at which time it was transformed into the Israel Defense Forces.

houses of the village. In the 1990s, the modern Bethlehem of Galilee became a popular tourist attraction.

IV. Analysis of the Evidence

The salient issues raised by the evidence presented above can be summarized as follows:

- **Two of the four Gospels, Matthew and Luke, provide significantly different birth narratives, which share Bethlehem of Judea as the birthplace of Jesus**
- **Birth narratives are absent from the other two Gospels, Mark and John**
- **Archaeological evidence suggests that Bethlehem of Judea was uninhabited for several hundred years, including the Herodian period during which time Jesus is believed to have been born, lived, and died**
- **Archaeological evidence indicates that a Jewish population existed in Bethlehem of Galilee during the period that covers the days of Jesus**
- **Archaeological evidence points to a significant Christian presence in Bethlehem of Galilee during the Byzantine period, which continued to modern times**

These issues cast a shadow of doubt on the validity of the belief held by most Christians that Bethlehem of Judea is the birthplace of Jesus. In fact, if the two Gospel authors used the correct name for the city of birth but, for some reason, specified the wrong geographical region, then it is likely that Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Galilee and not in Bethlehem of Judea.

Moreover, the following observations, drawn from the information found in the New Testament, require consideration as well:

- **According to the narrative in the Gospel of Luke, Mary, in an advanced stage of pregnancy, traveled 70 miles over a rough terrain, during the winter, on the back of a donkey, in order to reach Bethlehem of Judea for the census of Quirinius**

  At least the following two significant problems plague this account. First, with the census of Quirinius having been accurately dated to 6 C.E.,[17] which means that Jesus was born in that year. Second, the journey to Bethlehem of Judea is unlikely to have taken place, given the alternative of Bethlehem of Galilee being located only 4 miles away over a relatively constant terrain.[18] These difficulties give rise to the likelihood that the Nativity account in the Gospel of Luke is inaccurate at best, if not fictitious altogether.

- **According to the narrative in the Gospel of Matthew, Herod slaughtered all infants and toddlers in Bethlehem of Judea who were under the age of two years**

  There are two major problems with this account. First, the date of Herod's death is accurately known to be 4 B.C.E.,[19] which means that Jesus had to be born during the 4 – 6 B.C.E. time span, thus showing a 10-year discrepancy with the year of birth deduced from the account in the

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[17] James F. McGrath, *The Census of Quirinius and the Birth of Jesus of Nazareth* - http://blue.butler.edu/~jfmcgrat/jesus/quirinius.htm - where additional issues regarding the birth narratives are addressed.
[18] It is common medical knowledge (today) that a woman in an advanced stage of pregnancy, as attributed to Mary in the Gospel account, who would undertake this kind of journey under such conditions would almost certainly suffer a miscarriage along the way.
[19] See Footnote 17.

Gospel of Luke. Second, the archaeological evidence indicates that Bethlehem of Judea was not populated during the Herodian period, and that no viable record of such a massacre has been found outside of the New Testament. These difficulties give rise to the likelihood that the Nativity account in the Gospel of Matthew is inaccurate at best, if not fictitious altogether.

- **According to the New Testament, the adult life of Jesus was centered on the lower Galilee and the area around the Sea of Galilee**

  This fact supports the notion that Jesus was an itinerant preacher in that region, which was heavily populated by "Galilean Jews" who were looked down upon by the "Judean Jews" from Jerusalem and its vicinity.

- **The protective wall around the Christian Bethlehem of Galilee could indicate that the residents were trying to protect something very sacred to Christianity**

  Could this sacred thing be the birthplace of Jesus? Although no recorded reason has been found for the choice by the Templars of the site of Bethlehem of Galilee as their settlement, it is believed that they, too, considered it to be the birthplace of Jesus.

So, if Bethlehem of Galilee was the actual birthplace of Jesus, a key question is: *What would motivate the authors of the birth narratives in the New Testament to place the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem of Judea?*

The answer is: *The need to establish the link with King David via his place of birth, Bethlehem of Judea, and (falsely) stating that it was the prophesied place of birth of the Messiah.*

This was accomplished by using a verse in the Hebrew Bible – Micah 5:1[2 in Christian Bibles], part of which was utilized by the author of the Gospel of Matthew in fashioning his birth narrative. Table IV-1 displays side-by-side English renditions of the verse Micah 5:1[2], as well as the verse Matthew 2:6 in the New Testament since it contains the alleged quote from Micah 5:1[2]. A detailed analysis of this verse appears elsewhere (see the essay referenced in Footnote 2).

Table IV-1 – Comparing Matthew 2:6 with Micah 5:1[2]

Source	Passage Citation	Text
Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	**Micah 5:1**	And you, [of] Bethlehem [of] Ephrat, who were to be insignificant among the thousands of Judah, from you [he] shall emerge for Me, to be a ruler over Israel; and his origin is from old, from ancient days.
King James Version "Old Testament"	**Micah 5:2**	But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.
King James Version New Testament	**Matthew 2:6**	And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

The highlighted portion in the respective renditions contains the reason that Bethlehem of Judea was selected as the birthplace of Jesus. This is King David's hometown where he was born a millennium before the birth of Jesus. Since the

promised Jewish King/Messiah was to come from the House of David, having Jesus born there would create the desired link to King David via Joseph, whose genealogy leads to King David. Once this link was established, each of the two Gospels authors created his own account that led to the birth of Jesus and all that transpired afterward.

Aside from the Christian manipulation and mistranslation of the verse, it is also misinterpreted as prophesying that Bethlehem will be the birthplace of the promised future Jewish King/Messiah, a prophecy claimed in the New Testament to have been fulfilled by Jesus. As the detailed analysis presented in the essay referenced in Footnote 2 shows, this is not what the Prophet Micah said in this verse.

V. CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

The analysis presented above leaves little doubt that the stories about the birth of Jesus and the descriptions of circumstances surrounding this foundational event for Christianity are inaccurate. Not only are the two accounts of the Nativity inconsistent with each other, they are also shown to be inconsistent with the archaeological evidence obtained from the respective regions, as well as with verifiably accurate historical dates of relevant events.

The archaeological evidence alone rules out Bethlehem of Judea as the birthplace of Jesus by virtue of the fact that Bethlehem of Judea was a desolate location for many years before, during, and many years after the days of Jesus.

The dating of historical events, such as the year in which Herod died, 4 B.C.E., and the year of the census by Quirinius, 6 C.E., prove that both Nativity accounts – in the Gospel of Matthew and in the Gospel of Luke – are separated by some 10 years, which shows they cannot both be true.

What are the ramifications of these discoveries for Christianity? According to most Christian scholars, issues such as where Jesus was born are not critical elements to the survival of Christianity. Some, while accepting Bethlehem of Judea as the birthplace of Jesus, recognize that the Nativity stories were not written to strictly reflect history. Others hold that the precise birthplace of Jesus carries little to no importance relative to the essence of Christianity, which, for the Christian, is its focus on the essentials, such as Jesus himself and what he has done for humanity. They maintain that the "vast majority of churchgoers will continue to believe in Bethlehem."[20] Although this posture is troubling, it is not surprising, given that there are some two billion Christians in the world today, most of whom will never even be exposed to these findings, let alone be made aware, in an objective fashion, of all the other existing issues within the New Testament relative to the Hebrew Bible.

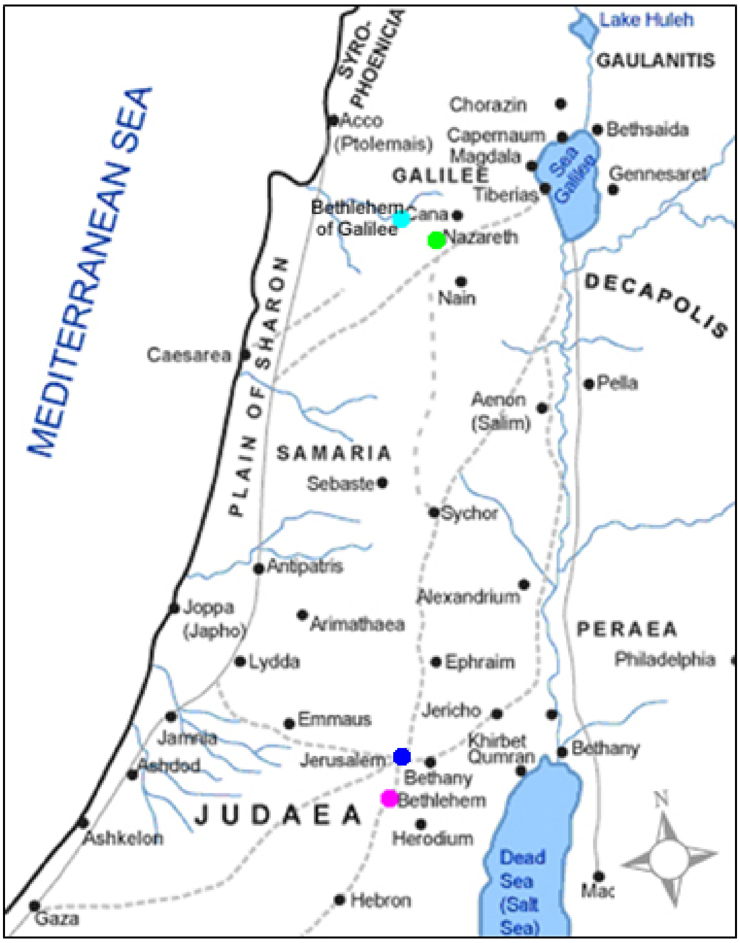
[20] *Searching for Bethlehem: Was it in Galilee or Judea?*, Richard N. Ostling, Associated Press - http://12.100.23.254:8080/bj/news/2000/December/23/docs/009531.htm & http://www.fuller.edu/news/html/carolers-hagner.asp

On the other hand, those who need to be aware of these problems and understand their impact are relatively few in numbers – Jews and Noahides. The Jews include both those who are still Jewish and are targets of Christian missionaries, as well as those unfortunate individuals who were deceived by Christian missionaries and have converted to Christianity. The Noahides include mostly those who left Christianity, as well as those of other faiths and beliefs that are consistent with the Seven Laws of Noah[21] and who formally declare themselves as being Noahides – they, too, have become prime targets for conversion to Christianity by Christian missionaries.

[21] See, for example, *The Noah's Covenant Website* - http://www.noahide.com/, *Chavurath B'nei Noach* - http://www.noahide.com/7laws.htm, *The Seven Noahide Laws* - http://www.auburn.edu/~allenkc/noahide.html, and the various links therein.

Appendix A

This map was taken from http://www.bible-history.com/maps/palestine_nt_times.html and slightly modified by adding the location of Bethlehem of Galilee and color-coding the three places of interest in this analysis. According to the Christian source of this map, Bible History Online (http://www.bible-history.com), this map shows the (Christian perspective of the) Land of Israel at the time during which Jesus is said to have lived.



Legend

- Bethlehem of Galilee
- Nazareth
- Jerusalem
- Bethlehem of Judea

DON'T MESS WITH THE BLOOD![1]

I. INTRODUCTION

According to Christian theology, the "Fall of Man", i.e., the sin of Adam and Eve, who ate from the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, has infected all humanity with a stain that ended "eternal life". Christians point to the ordinary animal sacrifices described in the Mosaic Law and claim that atonement for sins can be obtained only through the *shedding of blood*. However, this system was valid only for Jews, and it was effective only while there was a central location where the sacrificial animals could be offered. Namely, it was first the "portable" Sanctuary in the wilderness and, later, it was the Temple in Jerusalem.

The advent of Jesus changed all of this. The purpose for the arrival of Jesus, which is that God, out of his love for humanity, provided the "perfect sacrifice" in the form of "His only begotten son" Jesus (see John 3:16), forms the foundation on which Christianity rests. The death of Jesus on the cross was the last and final sacrifice, and his blood had the power of the ransom required to overcome the sinful nature of mankind, wipe clean the stain of "Original Sin", and restore "eternal life".

Christian missionaries to the Jews claim that, since the *shedding of blood* is required for the remission of sins, Jews have had no way to obtain atonement from the time the Romans destroyed the Second Temple in 70 C.E. Therefore, the only option left for a Jew is to accept Jesus as lord and savior, because he died for our sins.

The Biblical reference cited by missionaries in support of the claim is the following:

> **Leviticus 17:11(KJV) - "… for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul."**

The apparent message contained in this portion of the verse is echoed on several occasions in the New Testament. A superficial reading of only this portion of the verse in Leviticus, without studying the entire passage and placing this verse in its

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:

- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "h"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

proper context, will almost certainly lead one to conclude that only in being covered by the shed blood of Jesus on can forgiveness be obtained for one's sins.

This essay aims to correct this perception by explaining the sacrificial system that is mandated in the Hebrew Bible, and to show that associating with it the death of Jesus on the cross is false and inconsistent with what the Hebrew Bible teaches.

II. The Facts According to the Hebrew Bible

A. What else does Leviticus 17:11 say?

Table II.A-1 shows side-by-side renditions of the complete verse Leviticus 17:11. The portion used by Christian missionaries is highlighted in the respective renditions. The King James Version (KJV) translation includes a reference to a passage in the New Testament that points back to Leviticus 17:11. [This reference is from the New American Standard Bible (NASB). However, the corresponding passage quoted below the table is from the KJV for consistency.]

Table II.A-1 – The passage Leviticus 17:11

King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text
Leviticus 17:11		**ויקרא יז,יא**
For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul[(1)].	For the soul of the flesh is in the blood, and I have therefore given it [the blood] to you [to be placed] upon the altar, to atone for your souls; for it is the blood that atones for the soul.	כִּי־נֶפֶשׁ הַבָּשָׂר בַּדָּם הִוא וַאֲנִי נְתַתִּיו לָכֶם עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לְכַפֵּר עַל־נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם כִּי־הַדָּם הוּא בַּנֶּפֶשׁ יְכַפֵּר׃

(1) Hebrews 9:22(KJV) - And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

Although there is some disparity between the two translations of the verse, in general, they are reasonably consistent. Based on the proper reading of the Hebrew text, bracketed phrases have been added to the Jewish translation in order to clarify the context.

This verse is part of a passage that deals with the prohibition on the consumption of blood. When this verse is considered in its entirety, it becomes evident that a specific statement concerning blood is conveyed. Namely, that the blood of the sacrificed animal must be placed "**upon the altar to atone for your souls**", i.e., that *the only way* blood may bring atonement is if placed on the altar in the Temple – this is *a requirement* for both sin and guilt offerings.

A pertinent question here is: "*Was the blood of Jesus sprinkled on the altar as specified in Leviticus 17:11?*" The New Testament is silent on this requirement, and offers no evidence that the blood of Jesus was placed on the altar in the Temple, which was still standing in Jerusalem at the alleged time of his death.

This fact alone, that the biblical requirement was not satisfied, voids the claim that the death of Jesus provided atonement for any sins, not to mention the strict prohibition on human sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible, the Scripture in force.

B. Is blood the only means for the atonement of sins?

Many different methods for the atonement of various sins are identified in the Hebrew Bible. Among these, animal sacrifices, contrite repentance & prayer, and charitable deeds, are the three major paths to the remission of most sins.

1. Animal sacrifices

The Torah speaks of two kinds of animal sacrifices that were to be used for the atonement of iniquities: חַטָּאת (***h**aTAT*), **a sin sacrifice**, and אָשָׁם (***aSHAM***), **a guilt sacrifice**.

According to the Hebrew Bible, a sin sacrifice does not provide atonement for every kind of sin. Rather, its purpose is to atone only for unintentional sins committed by a person – the most insignificant type of transgression:

> **Numbers 15:27-28 - (27) And if a person sins inadvertently, then he shall offer a female goat in its first year as a sin offering [חַטָּאת]. (28) And the priest shall atone for the erring person who sinned inadvertently before the Lord in order to make atonement on his behalf; and it shall be forgiven him.**

The requirements concerning a sin sacrifice are specified in Leviticus 4:1-35, where these offerings are declared as mandatory, and that their purpose is to atone for sins committed unwittingly.

On the other hand, a sin sacrifice cannot atone for sins that were committed with intent. The willful sinner was barred from the Sanctuary, and had to bear his own iniquity because of his rebellious intent to sin against God:

> **Numbers 15:30-31 - (30) And the person who does anything presumptuously, whether he is a native born or a stranger, that person blasphemes the Lord; and that person shall be cut off from among his people. (31) Because he has scorned the word of the Lord, and has violated his commandment, that person shall surely be cut off, for his iniquity is upon him.**

There are, however, several specific transgressions that were committed with intent for which the Levitical Law of Sacrifice mandates a guilt sacrifice. The requirements concerning a guilt sacrifice for one of these transgressions are specified in Leviticus 5:14-26, where these offerings are declared as obligatory for robbery and misappropriation of Temple property, for which restitution had to be made as well.

An interesting case concerns the requirements for the atonement of sins such as being a false witness and then confessing to it, and entering the Sanctuary

inadvertently while being ritually unclean, and then realizing what happened and confessing to it (Lev 5:1-13). The Torah does not give a name for this required offering; the Sages of the Talmud refer to it as קָרְבָּן עוֹלֶה וְיוֹרֵד (***qor*****BAN** ***OLEH V*****e*****YORED***), **a variable offering**;[2] literally, a sliding scale offering that depended on a person's financial means, and which had the following progression:

✡ **Top level** – a female lamb or goat (i.e., a **blood** sacrifice):

> **Leviticus 5:6 – And he shall bring his guilt offering to the Lord for his sin which he committed, a female from the flock, either a sheep or a goat, for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for him from his sin.**

✡ **Intermediate level** – a pair of turtledoves or young pigeons (i.e., a **blood** sacrifice, but one that is less costly than a lamb or a goat):

> **Leviticus 5:7-10 – (7) And if he cannot afford a sheep, he who sinned shall bring as his guilt offering two turtle doves or two young pigeons before the Lord, one for a sin offering, and one for a burnt offering. (8) He shall bring them to the priest, who shall first offer up that [bird] which is [designated] for the sin offering; he shall cut its head at the nape, but shall not separate it. (9) And he shall sprinkle from the blood of the sin offering on the wall of the altar, and the remainder of the blood shall be pressed out onto the base of the altar; it is a sin offering. (10) And he shall offer up the second one as a burnt offering, according to the law; and the priest shall make atonement for him from his sin which he had committed, and he shall be forgiven.**

✡ **Bottom level** – a certain weight of fine flour (i.e., a **bloodless** offering; the least costly):

> **Leviticus 5:11-13 - (11) And if he cannot afford two turtledoves or two young pigeons, then he who sinned shall bring as his offering one tenth of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering; he shall not put oil on it, nor shall he place frankincense upon it, for it is a sin offering. (12) He shall bring it to the priest, and the priest shall scoop out a fistful as a memorial thereof, and burn it on the altar, upon the fires of the Lord; it is a sin offering. (13) The priest shall make atonement for him from his sin which he had committed in any one of these [instances], and he shall be forgiven; and [the rest of] it shall belong to the priest, like the meal offering.**

Note that an animal sacrifice is not required for atonement when an individual cannot afford the specified sin offering. Only "**one tenth of an ephah of fine flour**", free of oil and frankincense, serves as an acceptable (bloodless) sin offering!

Since these types of sacrifices do not include all possible sins, it follows that no animal sacrifices were mandated for all other transgressions not covered by either a sin sacrifice or a guilt sacrifice. Clearly, there had to exist some process, other than animal sacrifices, to obtain atonement for such sins.

[2] See, for example, the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sh[e]vu'ot, Folio 3a.

2. Contrite repentance and prayer

Another way to obtain atonement for sins is through contrite repentance and prayer. The Torah provides an early glimpse at this process:

> **<u>Deuteronomy 4:27-31</u> – (27) And the Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and you will remain few in number among the nations where the Lord will lead you. (28) And there you will serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which do not see, and do not hear, and do not eat, and do not smell. (29) And if, from there, you will seek the Lord your God, then you will find Him, if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. (30) When you are in distress, and these words will find their way to you; in the end of days, you will return to the Lord your God, and you will obey him; (31) For the Lord your God is a merciful God, He will not forsake you and will not destroy you; and He will not forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them.**

As is evident from verses 29-31, there is no mention of shedding of blood in order to regain God's favor; only contrite repentance is required.

The same message is found throughout the Hebrew Bible. For example, King Solomon echoes the same idea in his inaugural prayer during the consecration of the First Temple in Jerusalem, the one he built:

> **<u>1Kings 8:46-52</u> – (46) If they sin against You, for there is no man who does not sin, and You will be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, and their captors will carry them away captive to the land of the enemy, far or near; (47) And if they take it to heart in the land where they were held captive, and repent, and make supplication to You in the land of their captors, saying, "We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness"; (48) And they return to You with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies who led them away captive, and pray to You toward their land, which You gave to their fathers, [toward] the city which you have chosen, and [toward] the house which I have built for Your Name; (49) Then You shall hear their prayer and their supplication in heaven, Your dwelling place, and maintain their cause, (50) And forgive Your people what they have sinned against You, and all their transgressions that they have transgressed against You, and have mercy upon them before their captors, so that they may have mercy on them; (51) For they are Your people, and Your inheritance, whom You have brought out of Egypt, from inside the smelting furnace of iron; (52) That Your eyes may be open to the supplication of Your servant, and to the supplication of Your people Israel, to hear them whenever they call to You.** [See also 2Chronicles 6:36-40]

Later that night, God responds to Solomon:

> **<u>2Chronicles 7:12-15</u> – (12) And the Lord appeared to Solomon at night, and He said to him, "I have heard your prayer, and I have chosen this place for Myself for a House of sacrifice. (13) If I shut up the heaven and there be no rain, and if I command locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence upon My people. (14) And My people, upon whom My name is called, humble themselves and pray and seek My presence and repent of their evil ways, I shall hear from heaven and forgive their sin and heal their land. (15) Now, My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to the prayer of this place.**

In his prophetic message, King Solomon forewarns that one day the Jewish people will be driven out of the Land of Israel and be banished to the lands of their enemies, near and far. If, during their exile, they would fervently desire to repent of their sins, face Jerusalem from their exile, and confess their sins, then God will hear their prayers and forgive all their transgressions. There is no mention of shedding of blood or any other kind of sacrificial offering in King Solomon's message. The salient message here is that the contrite and penitent prayer of a remorseful sinner can bring about a complete remission of sins and forgiveness from God, which is also the centerpiece of Judaism's atonement process throughout the long and bitter times of the exile.

The prophets conveyed the message to the Jewish people that the contrite prayer of the repentant sinner serves as an alternative to, or a substitute for, the sacrificial system. This situation prevailed during the 70-year exile in Babylon following the destruction of the First Temple by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C.E., and it is also the situation today, which has prevailed since the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 C.E.

The Prophet Hosea foretells that there will be times in the future of Israel when the people would not have a king, or a sacrificial system, or a Temple, or a High Priest:

> **Hosea 3:4-5 – (4) For the people of Israel shall remain many days without a king, and without a nobleman, and without a sacrifice, and without a pillar, and without an ephod, and without teraphim; (5) Afterwards, shall the people of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God and David their king; and they shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the end of days.**

In a later chapter, Hosea gives the instructions on what will replace those animal sacrifices that atoned for unintentional sins while the Temple was standing in Jerusalem:

> **Hosea 14:2-3 – (2) Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God; for you have stumbled in your iniquity. (3) Take words with you and return to the Lord; say to Him: "You shall forgive all iniquity, and accept the good, and we will render [for] bullocks [the offering of our] lips."**

In other words, prayer is to replace the animal offerings during the times alluded to in Hosea 3:4-5. The true prophets never instructed the Jewish people to worship a crucified messiah or man-god; nor does the Hebrew Bible ever teach that an innocent man can die and thereby provide atonement for the sins of the people. Quite the contrary is true, as is evident from passages such as Exodus 32:31-33, Numbers 35:33, Deuteronomy 24:16, 2Kings 14:6, Jeremiah 31:29[30 in Christian Bibles], Ezekiel 18:4,20, and Psalms 49:7-8. The sincere prayers of the penitent sinner replace animal sacrifices.

3. Charitable deeds

Last, but not least, are the charitable deeds, צְדָקָה (***ts^e^daQAH***), **charity**. Since Judaism is a religion based on "works", with special emphasis on acts of charity, deeds of kindness are regarded as the most important component in the atonement process. The importance of acts of charity, and that doing good deeds is preferable to other actions, is stressed throughout the Hebrew Bible. In fact, צְדָקָה is mandated in the Torah:

> **Deuteronomy 15:7-8 – (7) If there will be among you a needy person, from one of your brothers within one of your cities, in your land the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, and you shall not close your hand from your needy brother; (8) For you shall surely open your hand to him, and you shall surely lend him enough for his need which he is lacking.**

This commandment is not limited to charitable acts exclusively toward Jews. In the Hebrew Bible, the command to love, to befriend, and to be kind toward a stranger is mentioned not less than 36 times, and frequently this command is linked with the phrase, "**... for you were strangers in the land of Egypt ...**", as the following passage demonstrates:

> **Leviticus 19:34 – "The stranger who dwells with you shall be to you as a native from among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt;" I am the Lord your God.** [See also Deuteronomy 10:19]

This message is not restricted to the Torah:

> **Proverbs 16:6 – Through loving kindness and truth will iniquity be atoned; and through the fear of the Lord [you] depart from evil.**
>
> **Daniel 4:24 [27 in Christian Bibles] - Only, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you, and your sins will be with charity removed, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; indeed, your tranquility will be prolonged.**

The Hebrew Bible also teaches which process is preferable to God:

> **Hosea 6:6 – For loving-kindness is what I desire, and not sacrifice; and knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.** [See also Jeremiah 7:21-23; Proverbs 21:3]
>
> **Micah 6:6-8 – (6) With what shall I come before the Lord, bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with yearling calves? (7) Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands streams of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? (8) Man has told you what is good; but what does the Lord demand of you? To do justice, and to love loving-kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.**

Clearly, charitable deeds and justice are superior to sacrificial offerings.

4. Other biblical examples of remission of sins without blood

In additions to these three methods for the atonement of sins, the Hebrew Bible points to other ways in which certain sins can be expiated, some of which are summarized in Table II.B.4-1.

Table II.B.4-1 – Bloodless atonement for miscellaneous iniquities

Action	Atonement for …	Sample reference
Death	desecrating the Holy Name	Isaiah 22:14
Incense	taking part in a rebellion	Numbers 17:11-12
Jewelry	shedding of blood in a war	Numbers 31:50
Punishment	various communal iniquities	Isaiah 40:2
Removing idols/idolatry	Idolatry & other unspecified sins	Isaiah 27:9

Clearly, the shedding of blood is not the only available option.

A succinct summary of the atonement process is present in the opening chapter of Book of Isaiah, where the prophet conveys what God prefers:

Isaiah 1:11-18 – (11) "Of what use to Me are your many sacrifices?" says the Lord; "I am sated from the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed cattle; and in the blood of bulls, and of sheep, and of male goats I do not delight. (12) When you come to appear before Me, who has requested this of you, to trample My courts? (13) You shall no longer bring a vain meal offering; it is incense of abomination to Me; as for the calling of an assembly on a New Moon and Sabbath, I cannot [bear] iniquity along with a solemn occasion. (14) Your New Moons and your appointed Feasts My soul hates, they are a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them. (15) And when you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you, and even when you pray much, I do not hear; your hands are full of blood. (16) Wash, cleanse yourselves, remove the evil of your doings from before My eyes; cease to do evil; (17) Learn to do good, seek justice, help the oppressed; do justice to the orphan, plead [the case] for the widow. (18) Come now, and let us reason together," said the Lord; "If your sins be as scarlet, they shall become as white as snow; if they be red as crimson, they shall become as wool."

Recognizing that a person has the ability to commit iniquity by exercising his or her God-given free will, Judaism specifies a path to righteousness and salvation that is based on contrite repentance, prayer, and good deeds. The "formula" for the atonement process resides within the Hebrew Bible, and it does not include the shedding of blood as a required component.

C. Is this just theory or hypothesis? What is the evidence?

The Hebrew Bible contains many examples that illustrate the atonement process. One example of note is the story in the Book of Jonah. This account describes the Nin^{e}vites, who were wicked people:

Jonah 1:1-2 – (1) And the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying, (2) "Arise, go to Nin^{e}veh, the great city, and call out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me."

The Prophet Jonah was chosen to deliver a message of doom and, after some coaxing, he went on his mission to warn the people of Nin^{e}veh about their impending demise:

> **Jonah 3:4 - And Jonah began to enter into the city, one day's walk, and he called out and said, "Another forty days, and Nin^{e}veh shall be overturned."**

The Nin^{e}vites heeded the message and started a process of repentance, not knowing if it would be acceptable to God:

> **Jonah 3:5-9 – (5) And the people of Nin^{e}veh believed in God, and they proclaimed a fast and donned sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them. (6) And word reached the king of Nin^{e}veh, and he arose from his throne, and he took off his royal robe; and covered himself with sackcloth, and sat on the ashes. (7) And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nin^{e}veh, from the counsel of the king and his nobles, saying: "Neither man and beast, nor the cattle and the flock shall taste anything; they shall not graze nor shall they drink water! (8) And they shall cover themselves with sackcloth, man and the beast, and they shall call mightily to God; and everyone shall repent from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. (9) Who knows if God will turn and relent, and turn away from his fierce anger, and we will not perish?"**

They donned sacks, fasted, and repented for their iniquities. God recognized their contriteness and relented from destroying them as He initially planned to do:

> **Jonah 3:10 - And God saw their deeds, that they repented from their evil way; and God relented of the evil, which He had spoken to do to them, and He did not do it.**

God accepted their repentance, forgave the Nin^{e}vites, and saved them and their great city from destruction without a blood sacrifice!

Another example is the situation that prevailed during the 70-year Babylonian exile. The sacrificial system was suspended in times when there was no Temple standing in Jerusalem. Following the return from Babylon and the rebuilding of the Temple, animal sacrifices were once again resumed. However, during those 70 years of the exile, while the Temple lay in ruins, no sacrificial offerings were possible. Yet, many righteous people lived in that period who had their sins removed through a bloodless atonement process – folks such as Daniel, Ezekiel, Ezra, Haggai, Jeremiah, Malachi, Nehemiah, Zechariah, among others – these were all men of God. Daniel's righteousness (along with that of Noah and Job [both righteous Gentiles]) was noted by the Prophet Ezekiel:

> **Ezekiel 14:14,20 – (14) "And if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would save themselves with their righteousness," says the Lord God.**
> **(20) And if Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live," says the Lord God, "if they will save a son or a daughter; they with their righteousness would save themselves."**

Jews were unable to offer sacrifices during that 70-year period, yet they remained righteous without a blood sacrifice. Clearly, the shedding of blood was not, and is not, a required component of the "formula".

Though a devout Jew asks for forgiveness in his or her daily prayers, the general time ordained in the Torah for atonement is the Holy Day of Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement; Leviticus 16:29-34 & Numbers 29:7-11). Yom Kippur is intended to be a vehicle for contrite repentance that will bring the atonement of a person's sins.[3]

III. Conflicting Positions within the New Testament

The earliest of the four Gospels, the Gospel of Mark, contains a story about a paralyzed man who was brought to Jesus to be healed (Mark 2:3-12). In this narrative, Jesus tells the paralyzed man that his sins are forgiven:

> **Mark 2:5(KJV) - When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.** [See also Luke 5:17-26; Luke 5:20 is the verse that parallels Mark 2:5]

In an account in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 7:47-50) Jesus forgives the sins of a woman who sought him out and washed his feet and put ointment on his head:

> **Luke 7:47-48 (KJV) – (47) Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. (48) And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.**

It seems that Jesus was able to forgive sins while he was alive, which appears to contradict the common Christian claim that the "sacrificial death" of Jesus on the cross and his spilled blood served to remove the sins of mankind. In fact, the argument that the blood of Jesus was required in order to "wash away" the sins is invalidated by the last verse in the passage about the woman whose sins were forgiven and removed, by Jesus' say-so:

> **Luke 7:50(KJV) - And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.**

The woman's sins were forgiven and "washed away" – she had been "saved"![4] This is in sharp contrast to the notion that the spilled blood of Jesus effected the removal of sins, which appears rather frequently in the Paul's Epistles, once in the Gospel of Matthew and several times in the Gospel of John. Interestingly, the approximate dating of Paul's Epistles is late-40's to mid-60's C.E.; that of the Gospel of Mark, 60's C.E.; that of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, 80's C.E.; and that of the Gospel of John, 90's C.E.

[3] It is important to note that Yom Kippur atones only for sins between man and God, but not for sins against another person unless a special part of the "process" has been completed. To atone for sins against another person, one must first seek reconciliation with the hurt party, righting the wrongs one committed against him or her, whenever possible, and only then is atonement possible. This must all be done prior to the Yom Kippur Holy Day.

[4] The forgiving of sins was part of the job of the "faith healers" of the times, even among the Jewish "charismatics", such as Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa. This is also gleaned from the Dead Sea Scrolls, in the "Prayer of Nabonidus", where Nabonidus, a Jewish "faith healer", pardoned the sins of the Babylonian king, thereby curing him from an illness that lasted for seven years.

Some pertinent questions are: *If Jesus was able to forgive sins while alive, why did he have to die to accomplish the same thing? Is John 3:16 not a false statement?*

It appears that Paul created the idea that Jesus had to die in order to remove the sins of mankind.

IV. SUMMARY

Christian missionaries use a phrase taken out of Leviticus 17:11 to claim that without the shedding of blood, specifically, the blood that Jesus shed on the cross, remission of sins is not possible.

The analysis of this claim, which involved a systematic examination of the laws that pertain to sacrificial offerings, as presented in the Hebrew Bible, demonstrates that:

- **It is always man who offers sacrifices to God; never the other way around**
- **Not all transgressions can be removed via the blood of sacrificial offerings**
- **The "sin offering" and "guilt offering" removed sins from the one who offered it**
- **For those transgressions that could be removed via the blood of sacrificial offerings, a certain process, as prescribed in the Hebrew Bible, had to be followed**
- **Alternative means to the blood of a sacrificial animal were available to both Jew and Gentile for the removal of sins**

In other words, the shedding of blood is not a requirement for the remission of sins and, therefore, this claim by Christian missionaries has no valid basis in the Hebrew Bible.

DEUTERONOMY 18:9-22 – IS IT ABOUT A PARTICULAR PROPHET?[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

The collection of so-called "proof texts" in the portfolio of Christian missionaries includes two verses from the 18th Chapter in the Book of Deuteronomy, verses 15&18, which are cited as evidence to support the common claim that the advent of Jesus is foretold in the Hebrew Bible. However, a careful reading and analysis of the entire passage, Deuteronomy 18:9-22, establishes the proper context of these two verses, and demonstrates the absurdity of such a claim.

Muslims, who lately started to target Jews for conversion to Islam, use these two verses as evidence that the arrival of Muhammad, Islam's "prophet", is foretold in the Hebrew Bible. Although the analysis presented herein is geared to refute the Christian claim, a similar case is easily made to refute the Islamic claim.

II. COMPARING CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

The Hebrew text and side-by-side English renditions of Deuteronomy 18:15&18 are displayed in Table II-1. The King James Version (KJV) translation is shown with pointers to cross-referenced passages in the New Testament. These references are taken from the New American Standard Bible (NASB). However, the corresponding passages below the table are quoted from the KJV for consistency.

Table II-1 – Deuteronomy 18:15&18

Deut	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	דברים
18:15	The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;[i]	A prophet from among you, from your brothers, like me, the Lord your God will set up for you; you shall listen to him.	נָבִיא מִקִּרְבְּךָ מֵאַחֶיךָ כָּמֹנִי יָקִים לְךָ יהוה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵלָיו תִּשְׁמָעוּן׃	יח,טו

[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:

- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "h̲"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

18:18	I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.	A prophet I will set up for them from among their brothers like you; and I will put My words into his mouth, and he will speak to them all that I shall command him.	נָבִיא אָקִים לָהֶם מִקֶּרֶב אֲחֵיהֶם כָּמוֹךָ וְנָתַתִּי דְבָרַי בְּפִיו וְדִבֶּר אֲלֵיהֶם אֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר אֲצַוֶּנּוּ׃	יח,יח
(i) Acts 3:22(KJV) - For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. Acts 7:37(KJV) - This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. John 1:21(KJV) - And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.				

The two translations of Deuteronomy 18:15&18 are reasonably similar, except that the noun נָבִיא (***navi***), which is properly rendered as **a prophet** in the Jewish translation, is partially capitalized as **a Prophet** in the KJV translation. This issue, which reflects a subtle attempt by the KJV translators to impute Christology into the text, is addressed in the analysis of these two passages along with the other highlighted terms in them.

III. Overview of Christian and Jewish Interpretations

A. Overview of the Christian Perspective

According to the New Testament, Jesus fulfilled a prophetic promise by Moses that is found in Deuteronomy 18:15&18 – two passages that are considered by Christians as messianic prophecies that foretell the advent of a great prophet who will arise from among the people.

While the Christian commentators admit the plausibility of the application of these passages to the succession of true prophets whom God commissioned to instruct, direct, and warn His people, the prevalent view is that the prophet spoken of and promised in this passage is pre-eminently Jesus. This view is supported by the claims that Jesus alone was like Moses in his character as a mediator, in the excellence of his ministry, in the number, variety, and magnitude of his miracles, in his close and familiar communion with God ("the Father"), and in his being the author of a new dispensation of religion (see the Jamieson, Fausset, & Brown commentary).

The Christian view is that this prediction was fulfilled some 1,500 years after the words were spoken by Moses, and was expressly applied to Jesus by Peter (Acts 3:22-23) and by Stephen (Acts 7:37). Moreover, according to the Gospels, Jesus thought of himself as a prophet (e.g., Matthew 13:57; Mark 6:4; Luke 4:24; John 4:44), a view that was shared by his followers (e.g., Matthew 21:11,46; Luke 7:16, 13:32-33, 24:19; John 6:14, 7:40).

Although it is not part of the detailed analysis presented herein, verse 19 has some relevance to this discussion:

> **Deuteronomy 18:19 – And it will be, that whoever does not hearken to My words that he [the prophet] speaks in My name, I will exact [it] of him.**

> **Deuteronomy 18:19(KJV) – And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.**

Many Christians perceive this passage as foretelling the dire consequences of unbelief in Jesus and the disregard of his mission, and Christian missionaries often allege that the Jewish people have suffered these consequences during the nearly 20 centuries that followed his ministry for rejecting Jesus.

Detailed Christian interpretations are available in standard Christian sources, such as commentaries by Matthew Henry and Jamieson, Fausset, & Brown.

B. Overview of the Jewish Perspective

According to the traditional Jewish perspective, Deuteronomy 18:9-22 is a passage through which the Torah strengthens the authority of the prophet by affirming him or her as the successor of Moses and the only legitimate channel for (two-way) communication with God. This is in complete contrast to what the Torah states of the king, whose power is limited. In this respect, a true prophet of Israel was more powerful than a king, whose power is limited according to the Torah (see Deuteronomy 17:14-20). Consequently, prophets were among the leaders of the Jewish society, along with priests, elders and, in monarchic times, with kings and royal officials. Some prophets also were influential members of the royal court.

God promises to show enduring concern for Israel by sending them prophets. According to the Hebrew Bible, a prophet is not someone whose main function is to tell the future, stealing knowledge from God and sharing it with the people (see, in contrast, the definition of a Gentile prophet in Deuteronomy 18:10-11). A prophet is someone who tells the truth; someone who does not tell us what we want to know, but rather tells us what God wants us to know, diligently reminding us of our covenantal obligations.

The passage Deuteronomy 18:9-22 teaches the Israelites about prophets and their role, since the people may naturally desire to know the future or to learn the Divine mind; and they will be living among nations who hold that the will of the gods was best learned through augury and sorcery. Within this passage, the description of the place of the prophet is preceded by a stern warning against dealing with soothsayers and diviners. It is a rephrasing of the severe injunctions commanded earlier in the Torah:

> **Leviticus 19:26,31 – (26) You shall not eat over blood; you shall not indulge in sorcery, and you shall not believe in lucky times.**

(31) You shall not turn to the mediums, nor shall you seek after the wizards, [and thereby] be defiled by them; I am the Lord your God.

While, on the surface, Deuteronomy 18:9-22 might appear to be speaking about “a prophet”, in reality it concerns the establishment of the ***Office of the Prophet*** via the expression "**… all that I shall command him.**" (Deuteronomy 18:18), a position filled by 50 Jewish prophets after Moses.

If, for the sake of argument, one were to *assume* that the prophet being described here is to be only one special future prophet, then it follows that all prophets who came after Moses, except for Moses and this particular prophet, were false prophets. Moreover, one must not ignore the warning found in Deuteronomy 18:20 concerning the fate of a false prophet. This is, of course, absurd – a false conclusion that would result from a false assumption.

The correct context of Deuteronomy 18:15&18 is that God will send His prophets, a [significant] prophet in each generation, to Israel; a prophet not of the same rank and caliber as Moses (Deuteronomy 34:10), but of the line of prophets of which Moses is the "titular father". The ***Office of the Prophet*** is thus conceived, and the mission of each of its occupants, who are also endowed with the gift of prophecy, is not so much to foretell the future as it is, in spiritual succession to Moses, to be the teacher and religious guide of his, or her, age.

IV. A CLOSER LOOK AT THE PASSAGE

A. Deriving the Proper Context

When selected verses from an entire passage are "quoted" by persons who do not know the Hebrew language and its idioms, the correct overall context is likely to be lost in favor of some biased interpretation. This precisely is the case with Deuteronomy 18:15&18, which Christian missionaries lift out of the passage Deuteronomy 18:9-22, a passage that deals with divination and prophecy.

As was noted earlier, the KJV translators made a *subtle* attempt to impute Christological significance to the two verses by rendering the translation of the Hebrew noun נָבִיא, **a prophet**, as **a Prophet** in both cases. It is worthwhile to point out at this point that, unlike most other languages that employ an alphabetical system, in the Hebrew language there is no upper-case/lower-case letter distinctions. Therefore, it is rather telling why the KJV translators decided to capitalize the term in these passages. A study of the application of the term “prophet” in both the KJV "Old Testament" and KJV New Testament is helpful in determining whether this particular treatment by the KJV is justified. The information is presented in Table IV.A-1.

<u>Table IV.A-1</u> – Application of the term "prophet" in the KJV Bible

Generic Term	KJV Bible Portion	Application	#	Reference	Remarks
prophet	"Old Testament"	prophet	294	N/A	Common use
		[a] Prophet	2	**Deuteronomy 18:15,18**	According to the NASB, **Deuteronomy 18:15** points to **John 1:21**
			1	1Samuel 9:9	Used here as a title, thus capitalized
	New Testament	prophet	156	N/A	Common use
		[the] Prophet	1	**John 7:40**	According to the NASB, **John 7:40** points to **John 1:21**, which points to **Deuteronomy 18:15&18**

<u>John 1:21(KJV)</u> - And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.
<u>John 7:40(KJV)</u> - Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.

It appears that the use of "the Prophet" at John 7:40, where it is a direct reference to Jesus, was designed ostensibly to establish a link, albeit a subtle one, between Jesus and the use of "a Prophet" in Deuteronomy 18:15&18.

What is the correct context of these two passages? In Deuteronomy 18:15, Moses speaks to the Israelites and <u>tells them about God's promise</u>. To paraphrase [Moses saying to the Israelites]:

> **God told ME that He would bring forth for YOU a prophet from YOUR midst …, LIKE ME, …**

In Deuteronomy 18:18, Moses speaks to the Israelites and <u>quotes God's promise as it was told to him</u>. To paraphrase [Moses quoting what God said to him]:

> **This is what God said to me: "I will bring forth a prophet for THEM from among THEM …, LIKE YOU, …".**

So, in effect, the two verses convey the same message – the former being a paraphrase of God's promise, and the latter being a quotation of God's promise.

The noun נָבִיא, which is the first highlighted word in the Hebrew text of the two verses shown in Table II-1, is in common use throughout the Hebrew Bible, where it appears, in all forms (singular, plural, male, female, with and without prepositions, in various inflections, etc.), on 315 occasions. Generally, whenever this term is applied <u>with the definite article</u> (and, occasionally, with an additional preposition or conjunction), such as, הַנָּבִיא (***ha'navi***), **the prophet**, וְהַנָּבִיא (***v^{e}ha'navi***), **and the prophet**, לַנָּבִיא (***la'navi***), **to the prophet**, etc., it <u>always</u> refers to a specific individual. In contrast, whenever the term is applied <u>without a definite article</u> (and, occasionally, with an additional preposition or conjunction), such as, נָבִיא, **a prophet**, וְנָבִיא (***v^{e}navi***), **and a prophet**, לְנָבִיא (***l^{e}navi***), **to a prophet**, etc., unless connected explicitly with a name or someone identified elsewhere in the nearby text, it is used in a <u>generic</u> sense. Shown below are the only two such exceptions to the <u>generic</u> case that are found in the Hebrew Bible,

where a specific person is either explicitly identified or implicitly identifiable (in all other cases, נָבִיא, וְנָבִיא, לְנָבִיא, etc., are generic references):

> **Genesis 20:7 - And now, return the man's wife [Sarah], because he [Abraham] is a prophet [נָבִיא], and he will pray for you [Avimelech] and [you will] live; but if you do not return [her], know that you will surely die, you and all that is yours.**
>
> **1Kings 13:18 – And he [the old prophet from Beth El] said to him [God's prophet from Judah], "I, too, am a prophet [נָבִיא] like you [כָּמוֹךָ (*kaMOcha*)], and an angel spoke to me with the word of the Lord, saying, 'Bring him back with you to your house, and he shall eat bread and drink water';" he lied to him.**

Consequently, the way that the singular or individual reference is to be understood in context, in the (idiomatic) Hebrew, is as being a general term, such as would be applicable to describe the ***Office of the Prophet***, rather than to identify a specific individual who occupies, or will occupy, it. This is also the case concerning false prophets in Deuteronomy 13:2, where the individual term נָבִיא, is used, but does not to point to any one specific individual.

Deuteronomy 18:18 contains the following description:

> **"…and I will put My words in his mouth; and he shall speak to them all that I shall command him."**

A prophet, i.e., any one of the true prophets of Israel, has the ability to speak only that which the Creator commands him, or her, and puts in his, or her, mouth; he himself, or she herself, may not speak or say anything on his or her own authority. The Hebrew Bible contains actual examples of this scenario:

> **Isaiah 59:21 – "As for Me, this is My covenant with them," says the Lord; "My spirit that is upon you, and My words which I have placed in your mouth; shall not depart from your mouth and from the mouth of your seed and from the mouth of your seed's seed," said the Lord, "from now and to eternity."**
>
> **Jeremiah 1:9 - And the Lord reached His hand, and He touched my mouth; and the Lord said to me, "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth."**

According to the Hebrew Bible, a prophet's primary role was to be God's messenger and spokesperson, communicating God's will in all matters. He or she was, in essence, the envoy through whom God, the divine King, governs Israel, as Deuteronomy 18:19 states:

> "**…whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will call him to account [for it].**",

This declaration establishes the prophet as the highest authority in the land, higher even than the king, about whose commands no similar declaration is ever made in the Hebrew Bible. As such, prophets played a major role in the religious, domestic, and political life of the nation, as was already noted earlier.

It is important to understand that these passages describe a prophet and not a god, a fact that is evident from the use of the terms **like me** [כָּמֹנִי (***kaMOni***)] and

like you [כָּמוֹךָ (***ka*mocha**)] in Deuteronomy 18:15&18, respectively. These two terms, כָּמֹנִי and כָּמוֹךָ, are the respective 1st-person singular masculine (or feminine) gender, and 2nd-person singular masculine gender inflections of the term כְּמוֹ (***k**e**mo***), **like**, **as**, and are used in cases where a comparison is made. Thus, it should be understood that God is telling Moses something like this:

> **"… just as you [Moses] are a prophet and not a god, so will he [the generic prophet] be a prophet and not a god; just as you were born of earthly parents, so will he be born of earthly parents."**

Although the prophets are the inspired declarers of the divine will, their abilities are not without limitations. They are bound by Torah – they may not add to it nor may they subtract from it, except as a **special dispensation** or a **temporary measure** of extreme urgency [called in Hebrew הוֹרָאַת שָׁעָה (***hora'at sha'ah***)].[2] Prophets may also not venture, solely by virtue of the prophetic gifts with which they were endowed, to give a ruling in matters of Torah Law. In this respect, they must yield to the judge, who is the learned authority empowered to interpret and apply the sanctions of the Law according to the accepted norms of Biblical interpretation (see Deuteronomy 17:8-13).

Sidebar Note Concerning False Prophets: Since the notion of true and false prophets is central to Deuteronomy 18:9-22, it is worthwhile to comment on this issue as part of the overall analysis.

The danger of having false prophets has always been present for Israel, in Biblical days as well as throughout the rest of Israel's history, all the way to the present time. Because the people were to rely on the instruction of prophets for important matters, some criteria were needed for identifying oracles that are not truly from God.

How are the people of Israel to identify a false prophet? The Hebrew Bible provides the "*litmus test*", and this test is valid even after a given prophet passes on – the prophetic horizon, though not unlimited, is definitely not limited by the prophet's own lifetime. Explicit clues for identifying false prophets are provided in the following passage:

> **Deuteronomy 13:2-6 – (2) If there arise in the midst of you a prophet, or a dreamer of a dream; and he gives you a sign or a wonder, (3) and the sign or the wonder whereof he spoke unto you occurs, [and he] says, "Let us go after other gods which you have not known, and let us worship them"; (4) you shall not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or unto that dreamer of a dream; for the Lord, your God, is testing you, to know whether you truly love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul. (5) You shall follow the Lord, your God, and Him you shall fear, and His commandments you shall keep, and unto His voice you shall hearken, and Him you shall worship, and unto Him you shall cleave. (6) And that prophet or that dreamer of a dream shall be put to death, because he spoke falsehood about the Lord, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and who redeemed you from the house of bondage, to lead you astray from the way in**

[2] A biblical example of this is found at Hosea 3:4-5&14:2-3, where the prophet foretells of times when there will be no Temple standing in Jerusalem, for which he instructs Israel to offer their prayers instead of sacrifices. A post-biblical example is that the biblical requirement to perform a *Brit Milah* (ritual circumcision) on the 8th day after the birth of a male child may be postponed when such a procedure could endanger the infant's life. Many other examples are cited in the Talmud and in other sources.

which the Lord, your God, commanded you to go; and so you shall remove the evil from your midst.

Thus, even an acknowledged prophet is automatically proven false if he or she claims to have been sent by God to advocate any form of idolatry, or if he or she proclaims any precept of the Torah to be abrogated permanently.

The test of the false prophet, which was the non-fulfillment of the particular prediction he or she announced as the credentials of his or her divine call, is spelled out in Deuteronomy 18:22. However, one must keep in mind that signs and miracles performed by someone who claims to be a prophet are not necessarily the proof of his or her truth (see Deuteronomy 13:2&6).

The prophet Jeremiah offers his own formula to distinguish between true and false prophets:

Jeremiah 28:8-9 – (8) [There] were the prophets of old before me and before you; and [they] prophesied to many countries, and unto great kingdoms, for war, and for evil, and for pestilence. (9) [As for] the prophet who will prophesy for peace; when the word of that prophet shall come to be, then will the prophet whom the Lord truly sent be known.

If the message is painful for the prophet to utter and painful for the people to bear, it is likely an authentic message from God. On the other hand, if prophetic words are popularly received then there is reason to doubt them, and the prophet himself, or prophetess herself, would have reason to doubt the authenticity of the message as well.

False prophecy is punishable by death, according to Torah:

Deuteronomy 18:20 - But the prophet who intentionally speaks a word in My name, which I did not command him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.

Two types of false prophecy punishable by execution are described here:

- **Presuming to speak in God's name oracles that He did not command**
- **Speaking in the name of other gods**

The Hebrew Bible records cases in which proceedings were initiated against persons claiming to be prophets (e.g., 1Kings 22, Jeremiah 26, 2Chronicles 18). These individuals were accused of falsely attributing their prophecies to God. Some were exonerated, others were put to death.

The overall context of Deuteronomy 18:9-22 should now be clear. In preparing the Israelites to enter the Promised Land, Moses, by speaking of prophets and prophecy, true and false, and how to distinguish between them, is teaching the people what they will find there that could divert them from their spiritual path. The underlying message of this passage is that Israel need not fear the efforts of sorcerers and other such characters, because Israel's destiny is far beyond the ability of anyone to inflict harm unto them.

B. The Fallacy of the Christian Missionary Claim

As noted earlier, the New Testament asserts that Jesus is the manifestation of this allegedly special prophet of which Deuteronomy 18:15&18 speak. Some of the many flaws in this popular Christian missionary claim are identified below:

Problem #1 – Jesus vis-à-vis the Prophets of Israel

Like the prophets of Israel, Jesus chastised the people for not doing God's will, for turning from God's laws, but that is where the similarity ends. The prophets of Israel justified their pronouncements on God's Torah. They never acted on their own authority, always acknowledging God's supremacy, and His Law's (the Torah's) immutability. On the other hand, by proclaiming his justification on his own authority, Jesus did not follow the path of the true prophets of Israel.

Problem #2 – Jesus vis-à-vis Moses

God promised Israel a (generic) prophet, one who would be **like** [כָּמֹוֹ], not greater than, Moses. According to the New Testament and Christian theology, however, Jesus is much greater than Moses was, because Moses was a prophet born of earthly parents, while Jesus is for Christians the divine "Son of God", and for Trinitarians, he is one component of the triune godhead.

Problem #3 – Jesus vis-à-vis God

Combining the above two issues, and in view of the fact that (Trinitarian) Christians view the three components of the triune godhead as co-equals, one must wonder what kind of a god Jesus is if he can only say whatever God tells him to say (v. 18).

Problem #4 – Jesus vis-à-vis the People of the Land

Deuteronomy 18:16 ends with the phrase in which Moses quotes the Israelites saying at Mount Sinai [Horeb]:

> **"… Let me not continue to hear the voice of the Lord my God, and let me not see this great fire any more, so that I will not die."**

The people were afraid that they would see God and die since, as the Hebrew Bible teaches, no person can see God and live (Exodus 33:20). According to the New Testament, Jesus, as God manifest in the flesh, came to live among the people, and he interacted with them all the time; he saw them and they saw him, he spoke to them and they spoke to him. How, then, could Jesus also be this prophet? After all, the people among whom he lived did not die when they saw him.

Problem #5 – Jesus vis-à-vis the People of the World

The New Testament, in which it is claimed that Jesus is the manifestation of the prophet that is foretold in Deuteronomy 18:15&18, includes the following warning:

> **"… every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." (Acts 3:23[KJV])**

Has this actually happened in the world? Most of the world's population is not Christian and does not listen to Jesus, let alone know of him, yet they have not been destroyed.

When Christian missionaries claim that Acts 3:23 concerns only the Jewish people, the question they should be asked is: "*Has this really happened to the Jewish people?*" After all, the Jewish people are alive and well today, and are more successful now than ever before.

Problem #6 – Jesus vis-à-vis the "*Litmus Test*" for True & False Prophets

As was noted earlier, a prophet who presumes to speak in God's name words that he was not commanded and/or speaks in the name of other gods, is a false prophet who is to be put to death.

According to the New Testament, Jesus "prophesied" the following:

> **<u>Matthew 16:28(KJV)</u> - Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.**

⃠ **This "prophecy" was not fulfilled!** The generation that Jesus addressed died 20 centuries ago!

Jesus makes a "prophecy" concerning the time he will spend in the tomb (the "Sign of Jonah"):

> **<u>Matthew 12:38-40(KJV)</u> – (38) Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. (39) But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: (40) For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.**

⃠ **The "prophecy" of the "Sign of Jonah" [3 days & 3 nights in the tomb] was not fulfilled!** Jesus was "in the heart of the earth" not more than 36 hours.

According to the Gospel of Luke, he died on Friday afternoon and "rose" on Sunday before dawn – a total of some 36 hours. When the women reached his tomb, he was already gone (Luke 23:54--24:3). According to the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus remained in the tomb from Friday afternoon until Saturday evening at nightfall - a total of some 26 hours (Matthew 28:1)!

<u>Conclusion</u>: If Jesus was a prophet at all, he was a false prophet!

Finally, it is interesting to note that, while Christian missionaries often quote Deuteronomy 18:15&18, they avoid the rest of the passage, and Deuteronomy 18:20 in particular, which specifies death by execution for a false prophet.

When a person, such as a false prophet, is sentenced to die by execution, the Torah requires the following procedure with the body:

> **<u>Deuteronomy 21:22-23</u> – (22) And if be that a man commits a sin deserving death, and he is put to death, and you shall hang him on a tree [wooden pole]; (23) His body shall not remain all night upon the tree [wooden pole], for you shall surely bury him on that**

[same] day, for he who is hanged is accursed by God; and you shall not defile your land, which the Lord, your God, is giving you as an inheritance.

This passage describes a scenario that can easily be applied to the crucifixion of Jesus, and it can be combined with Deuteronomy 18:20 to argue that he was a false prophet, a sin for which the death penalty is prescribed in the Torah (recall that the Hebrew Bible was the scripture in force at that time!).

The issues that plague the Christian perspective on Deuteronomy 18:9-22, as described above, provide a powerful dose of food for thought with which to challenge those who promote their false claims about this passage.

V. SUMMARY

Deuteronomy 18:9-22 does not speak of any one prophet in particular who will emerge from among the Jewish people. As has been demonstrated, any claims that the passage points to Jesus are self-defeating and create additional problems for those who promote such claims. Rather, this passage contains a generic reference to the line of prophets of which Moses is the "progenitor", and it formally establishes the ***Office of the Prophet*** for Israel, the requisite tests for distinguishing between true and false prophets, and the penalty for false prophecy.

Within traditional Judaism, it is held that true prophecy was removed from the world following the destruction of the First Temple (King Solomon's) in the year 586 B.C.E. Those prophets who were alive at that time, such as Ezekiel, Haggai, Jeremiah, Malachi, and Zechariah, continued their respective missions as true prophets, and their works are included in the Hebrew Bible. The historical record and the Hebrew Bible confirm that:

✡ **Prophecy ceased several centuries <u>before</u> the advent of Jesus:**

<u>Psalms 74:9</u> - Our signs we have not seen, there is no longer a prophet; and there is none among us who knows for how long.

✡ **Prophecy will return one day in the future (in the messianic era):**

<u>Joel 3:1</u> - And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your elders shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions;

<u>Malachi 3:23[4:5 in Christian Bibles]</u> - Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord;

Just as the Davidic dynasty was established forever (2Samuel 7:12-16), regardless of whether the throne is occupied by a king at all times, so has the ***Office of the Prophet*** been established for eternity, even at times in history when there are no prophets in Israel.

“THE PRINCE” OF EZEKIEL: WHO IS HE?[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

The very notion that the promised Jewish Messiah will be an ordinary flesh-and-blood human being is rather disturbing to Christian apologists. After all, if Jesus was/is the Messiah, then, according to Christian belief, he was/is not just an ordinary person; he was/is allegedly both human and divine. However, he was/is not expected to partake in certain human functions, such as procreation and, since he was/is allegedly divine, he was/is not capable of committing iniquity.

In this essay, one of the central figures in the Book of Ezekiel, **The Prince**, הַנָּשִׂיא (***ha'nasI***), will be studied and identified. The focus will be on this individual as he is depicted in the last nine chapters of the Book of Ezekiel, in which the Prophet describes the Third Temple, service rituals, various personnel, and other relevant and important activities, actions, circumstances, and events.

II. USAGE OF THE TERM נָשִׂיא (*nasI*) IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

The noun נָשִׂיא appears in the Hebrew Bible on 130 occasions in various declensions of both its singular [נָשִׂיא] and plural [נְשִׂיאִים (***n^esi'IM***)][2] forms, and 37 of these applications are found in the Book of Ezekiel. The noun נָשִׂיא may have any one of several meanings when used in the Hebrew Bible, all of which are related to some leadership role. נָשִׂיא can mean **head of a tribe**, or **leader of a community**, or **head of a country** (e.g., **ruler**, **king**). In Modern Hebrew, נָשִׂיא means **president**, which is applicable to being president of any entity – country, company, organization, etc. A Biblical synonym of נָשִׂיא is נָגִיד (***naGID***),

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:

- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as “h̲”
  - The letter כ is transliterated as “ch”
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as “k”
  - The letter ק is transliterated as “q”
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted “e” following the consonant
  - There is no “doubling” of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

[2] There is also a distinct application of the plural form, נְשִׂיאִים, as **rain clouds**, both in Biblical Hebrew (Jeremiah 10:13, 51:16, Psalms 135:7, Proverbs 25:14) and in Modern Hebrew. These four instances will be excluded from this study.

of which there are 44 instances in the Hebrew Bible, with one of these appearing in the Book of Ezekiel, in reference to the ruler of Tyre (Ezekiel 28:2). Table II-1 shows the noun נָשִׂיא as it appears throughout the Hebrew Bible.

Table II-1 – Applications of נָשִׂיא in the Hebrew Bible

Book	Jewish Individuals					Gentile Ruler(s)	Total
	"?"	King(s)	Head(s) of Tribe/Clan	Other Ruler(s)	Other VIP(s)		
Genesis					1	3	4
Exodus			3	1			4
Leviticus			1				1
Numbers			61			1	62
Joshua			12			1	13
1 Kings		1	1				2
Ezekiel (1-39)		8	1			8	17
Ezekiel (40-48)	17/1	2					20
Ezra				1			1
1 Chronicles			3		1		4
2 Chronicles			2				2
Total:	18	11	84	2	2	13	130

The data in Table II-1 (excluding the 18 instances [17 of - הַנָּשִׂיא and 1 of נָשִׂיא] shown in the column labeled **"?"**) reveal the following facts:

- **The most common application of נָשִׂיא is in reference to the heads of Israelite tribes and clans.**
- **The only applications of נָשִׂיא to Jewish monarchs are found in 1 Kings (once out of a total of two cases) and in Ezekiel (ten times out of a total of 19 cases). The term is *__never__* applied to a Jewish king in Torah and in Writings.**
- **Of the 19 specifically identified applications of נָשִׂיא in Ezekiel, only once does the Prophet use it to refer to tribal leaders and on eight occasions he applies it to Gentile rulers.**

III. THE PRINCE OF EZEKIEL CHAPTERS 40-48

In Hebrew, a noun may take on different forms, depending on the preceding preposition, and with or without the definite article. In Ezekiel 40-48, the phrase הַנָּשִׂיא, **The Prince**, appears in these three additional forms: וְהַנָּשִׂיא (***v^e^ha'nasi***), **and The Prince**, לַנָּשִׂיא (***la'nasi***), **for/to The Prince**, and וְלַנָּשִׂיא (***v^e^la'nasi***), **and for/to The Prince**. Table III-1 shows the 17 instances of these forms in which the phrase הַנָּשִׂיא, **The Prince**, appears in Ezekiel 40-48. Also shown is the single case of the noun נָשִׂיא, **a prince**; i.e., without the definite article, that occurs in these nine chapters.

<u>Table III-1</u> – Instances of הַנָּשִׂיא, The Prince, and נָשִׂיא, a Prince, in Ezekiel 40-48

Hebrew	Transliteration	Translation	#	References
הַנָּשִׂיא	***ha'nasI***	**the prince**	9	Ezekiel 44:3, 45:17,22, 46:2,4,8,12,16,18
וְהַנָּשִׂיא	***v*[e]*ha'nasI***	and **the prince**	1	Ezekiel 46:10
לַנָּשִׂיא	***La'nasI***	for/to **the prince**	6	Ezekiel 45:16, 46:17, 48:21(2x), 48:22(2x)
וְלַנָּשִׂיא	***v*[e]*La'nasI***	and for/to **the prince**	1	Ezekiel 45:7
נָשִׂיא	***nasI***	**a prince**	1	Ezekiel 44:3
Total:			**17/1**	**Ezekiel Chapters 40-48**

It is now possible to search for clues that will help identify **The Prince** of whom Ezekiel is speaking.

A. Searching for Clues

All the verses referenced in Table III-1 are included in this analysis. For emphasis and clarity, each occurrence of the English equivalent of a phrase in the verses listed in Table III-1 will be shown in highlighted form.

The first clue is provided from the fact that the nine chapters, Ezekiel 40-48, describe the Third Temple in Jerusalem. This indicates that the time frame of these events is the messianic era:

<u>Clue #1</u>: The Prince is someone who will be living during the messianic era.

The earliest instance of הַנָּשִׂיא, **The Prince**, in this portion of the Book of Ezekiel, occurs at Ezekiel 44:3. This particular verse also includes the only case of the noun נָשִׂיא, **a prince**, in these last nine chapters:

> **<u>Ezekiel 44:3</u> - As for the prince, being a prince, he shall sit in it to eat bread before the Lord; he shall enter by the way of the vestibule of that gate, and by the same way he shall leave.**

This verse is part of the vision Ezekiel had of the Third Temple. He describes the East Gate by which he entered earlier (Ezekiel 43:1) as being shut after God entered the Sanctuary (it was by the East Gate that the Divine Presence had departed from the Temple [Ezekiel 10:19] and gone up to the mountain, remaining on the east side of the city [Ezekiel 11:23]). One learns here that **The Prince**, perhaps due to his exalted office, is permitted to use the interior of the outer east gateway to partake of the sacrificial meal (similar language for food from the sacrificial offerings, לֶחֶם [***LE<u>h</u>em***], **bread/food**, is found in Leviticus 3:11, 21:6 and Numbers 28:2, among others). However, even he is not allowed to enter through the East Gate from the outside, and must pass into the outer court through the northern or the southern gateway, and then enter the hall from the court.

<u>Clue #2</u>: The Prince is someone who, due to his position, enjoys a unique privilege of being able to eat from the offered food in the Sanctuary.

The next two passages deal with the amount of land apportioned to **The Prince**, its configuration, shape, and location:

> **<u>Ezekiel 45:7</u> – And a portion shall be for the prince on either side of the designated holy area, and of the possession of the city, in front of the designated holy area, and in front of the possession of the city, from the west side westward, and from the east side eastward; and the length shall correspond to one of the portions, from the west border to the east border.**
>
> **<u>Ezekiel 48:21-22</u> – (21) And the remainder shall be for the prince, on either side of the holy portion, and of the possession of the city, along the twenty five thousand of the designated area to the border on the east, and westward opposite the twenty five thousand to the western border, opposite the portions for the prince; and it shall be the holy area; and the Sanctuary of the House shall be in its midst. (22) And thus the possession of the Levites, and the possession of the city, shall be in the midst of that which belongs to the prince; between the border of Judah and the border of Benjamin, shall belong to the prince.**

The portion for **The Prince** will equal the portion given to any one tribe, and it will be split in the middle by the holy area allocated for the Priests, Levites, and the city. Perhaps the fact that his possession will be flanked by those of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin also has some significance, but that will not be discussed now.

<u>Clue #3</u>: The Prince will be given a parcel of land that is equivalent to that of any one tribe.

The following passages indicate that **The Prince** will partake on some activities similar to those normally performed by the priests:

> **<u>Ezekiel 45:16-17,22</u> - (16) All the people of the land shall give this offering for the prince in Israel. (17) Upon the prince shall be [the responsibility for] the burnt offerings, and the meal offerings, and the libations on the Feasts, the New Moons, and the Sabbaths, on all the appointed times of the House of Israel; he shall prepare the sin offering, and the meal offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings, to atone for the House of Israel.**
> **(22) And upon that day shall the prince prepare for himself and for all the people of the land a bull for a sin offering.**
>
> **<u>Ezekiel 46:4,12</u> - (4) And the burnt offering that the prince shall offer to the Lord on the Sabbath day shall be six lambs without blemish, and a ram without blemish. (12) And when the prince shall prepare a voluntary burnt offering or peace offering to the Lord, the gate that faces east shall be opened for him, and he shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings, as he did on the Sabbath day; then he shall go out; and after he goes out, the gate shall be closed.**

Does this imply that **The Prince** must be a priest? Not at all! Other events are recorded in the Hebrew Bible where the kings did partake in some

activities similar to those of the priests (highlighting added for emphasis throughout this document unless otherwise noted):

> **2 Samuel 6:14 – And David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod.**
>
> **2 Samuel 6:17 And they brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in his place, in the midst of the Tabernacle that David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord.**
>
> **1 Kings 8:63-64 – (63) And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered to the Lord, twenty two thousand oxen, and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep. And the king and all the people of Israel dedicated the House of the Lord. (64) The same day the king hallowed the middle of the court that was before the House of the Lord, for there he offered burnt offerings, and meal offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings; because the bronze altar that was before the Lord was too small to receive the burnt offerings, and meal offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings.**
>
> **1 Kings 9:25 - And three times in a year did Solomon offer burnt offerings and peace offerings upon the altar which he built to the Lord, and he burned incense upon the altar that was before the Lord. And he finished the House.**

David and his successors, in addition to their regal dignity, also performed certain priestly functions, albeit not of the same standing as Aaron and his descendants. Perhaps this is a lesson about the model a Jewish king should strive to follow – he should be a political ruler and, at the same time, be like a priest, drawing the Jewish people closer to God.

In addition to the specification on entering the Temple when going to eat of the sacrificial food, on the Sabbath and on a New Moon **The Prince** will enter the Temple in a specified manner:

> **Ezekiel 46:2,8 – (2) The prince shall enter by the way of the vestibule of that gate from outside, and shall stand by the post of the gate, and the priests shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings, and he shall bow down at the threshold of the gate; then he shall go out; but the gate shall not be closed until the evening. (8) And when the prince shall enter, he shall go in by the way of the vestibule of that gate, and he shall go out by the same way.**

While on מוֹעֲדִים (***mo'aDIM***), **appointed times**, i.e., Biblical Festivals and Holy Days (per Leviticus 23), **The Prince** will enter the Temple in yet a different manner:

> **Ezekiel 46:10 - And the prince in their midst, when they go in, he shall go in; and when they go out, he shall go out.**

Clearly, **The Prince** is someone special, yet he is expected to mingle with his constituents on the Festivals and Holy Days, perhaps an activity which accords with the honor and dignity of a ruler.

Clue #4: The Prince will have a leadership role among the Jewish people.

As noted above, **The Prince** will be given as his possession a plot of land that is equivalent to that of any tribe; he will own it:

> **Ezekiel 46:16-18 - (16) Thus says the Lord God: If the prince gives a gift to any of his sons, it is his inheritance to remain in their possession; it is their property by inheritance. (17) But if he gives a gift of his inheritance to one of his servants, then it shall be his until the year of liberty, and then it returns to the prince; only to his sons shall his inheritance belong. (18) The prince shall not take any of the inheritance of the people to wrongfully force them out of their possession; only from his own possession shall he give his sons inheritance; so that My people should not be scattered, each man from his possession.**

This passage provides important information. First, note that **The Prince** will have progeny, real children, since there is a rule stated here about his giving a parcel of land from his own possession to any of his בָּנִים (***baNIM***), **sons**.

Second, **The Prince** may give as a gift only from his own plot of land. He may not displace others from their land in order to give someone a gift.

Furthermore, note that, even if **The Prince** gives a parcel of land from his possession to one of his servants, that plot will return to the possession of **The Prince** or his sons in the year of Jubilee (see Leviticus 25:8-55 on Jubilee; and Leviticus 25:24-28 on Redemption of Land). Clearly, the ownership of the parcel of land assigned to **The Prince** is treated as if it were that of a tribe – it must remain within the family's ownership.

Clue #5: The Prince will have progeny, he will be an ordinary "flesh & blood" human being, and will be bound by the Laws of Torah.

Five clues have been collected thus far to help identify **The Prince**. The information contained in these clues can be summarized as follows:

The Prince will be a leader within Israel in the messianic era. He will be fully human, will have children, and will own a tribal-sized plot of land around the sacred Temple grounds. He will have some special privileges and limitations with regard to the Temple that will stand in his days in Jerusalem, and where he will be performing some priestly functions.

Given this description, can this person be unambiguously identified? Not yet! It may be possible to narrow down the choices, perhaps to two or three candidates: the High Priest, the Davidic King/Messiah, or some other type of high official. However, this is not a satisfactory resolution of the question: ***Who Is "The Prince" of Ezekiel?*** A specific identification is required.

B. Identifying The Prince

Chapters 40-48 are messianic, but they are not the only messianic material in the Book of Ezekiel. Other messianic passages in Ezekiel include several chapters that precede Chapters 40-48. Table III.B-1 shows all instances of

the terms נָשִׂיא, **a prince**, and הַנָּשִׂיא, **The Prince**, as applied to Jewish monarchs in Chapters 1-39 in the Book of Ezekiel.

Table III.B-1 – הַנָּשִׂיא\נָשִׂיא applied to Jewish monarchs in Ezekiel 1-39

Hebrew	Transliteration	Translation	#	References	Identification
נָשִׂיא	***nasi***	**a prince**	2	Ezekiel 34:24, 37:25	The Messiah (David)
הַנָּשִׂיא	***ha'nasi***	**the prince**	1	Ezekiel 12:10	Zedekiah
וְהַנָּשִׂיא	***v^eha'nasi***	and **the prince**	1	Ezekiel 12:12	Zedekiah
נְשִׂיא	***n^esi***	**prince of…**	1	Ezekiel 21:30	Zedekiah
נְשִׂיאֵי	***n^esiei***	**princes of…**	3	Ezekiel 19:1, 21:17, 22:6	Kings of Judah; Jehoiakim, Zedekiah, and Jehoahaz
Total:			**8**	**Ezekiel Chs. 1-39**	

Out of the above-listed eight citations, only Ezekiel 34:24 and Ezekiel 37:25 are parts of messianic passages, and the remaining six are historical. These two messianic passages will now be analyzed to see if they contain additional information that may help to identify **The Prince** of Chapters 40-48:

> **Ezekiel 34:23-24 – (23) And I will set up over them one shepherd and he will shepherd them, namely My servant David, he will shepherd them, and he will be to them a shepherd. (24) And I, the Lord, shall be to them for a God, and My servant David [will be] a prince [נָשִׂיא] in their midst; I, the Lord, have spoken.**
>
> **Ezekiel 37:24-25 – (24) And My servant David shall be king (מֶלֶךְ [*melech*]) over them; and they all shall have one shepherd; and they shall follow My ordinances, and observe My statutes, and do them. (25) And they shall dwell on the land that I have given to My servant, to Jacob, wherein your forefathers lived; and they shall dwell upon it, they and their children, and their children's children forever, and My servant David shall be their prince [נָשִׂיא] forever.**

The second of these two passages is part of Ezekiel's **Vision of Dry Bones**, perhaps one of the most detailed and vivid descriptions in the entire Hebrew Bible of the messianic agenda and the conditions during messianic era.

Ezekiel utilizes similar language in both passages, some of which he also uses in Chapters 40-48. Both passages combine the role of king, which signifies political leadership, with the role of shepherd, which denotes spiritual leadership. The King/Messiah is expected to combine these roles; he will be the ideal future shepherd that will lead Israel, and David is the prototype of this. Both passages utilize the term נָשִׂיא to characterize **David**, a common reference in the Hebrew Bible to the future King/Messiah.

When the information from the five clues contained in Chapters 40-48 is combined with the specific association of the terms **prince, shepherd, king,**

and David (being common references to the King/Messiah), it is possible to positively identify **The Prince**.

The Identity of The Prince

Ezekiel himself indicates that The Prince, who will serve as a leader of Israel during the messianic era, will be the Jewish King Messiah, the descendant of King David who will embody the renewal of the Davidic dynasty from its dormant period since its last king, King Zedekiah.

IV. RESPONDING TO CLAIMS BY CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES

Mainline Christians generally do not agree with their evangelical Christian missionary brethren on who **The Prince** of Ezekiel is. Although the paradigms suggested by mainline non-evangelical Christian denominations are problematic vis-à-vis that which the Hebrew Bible teaches, they will not be addressed. Rather, the claims made by Christian missionaries will be considered, since these require a timely response due to their potential harmful impact on members of the Jewish community who are being targeted for conversion to Christianity.

Christian missionaries consider the Jewish paradigm, that **The Prince** of Ezekiel is the promised Jewish Messiah who will be a fully human descendant of King David, as a blasphemous attack on their belief that Jesus was/is the Messiah. They make claims such as the following:

- ✞ **The Prince of Ezekiel 40-48 is not the Messiah**
- ✞ **The Messiah will not have progeny (i.e., real offspring)**

These two claims are, of course, a direct challenge to Judaism's perspective. Interestingly, mainline Christianity, though using flawed reasoning that is contradictory to what the Hebrew Bible teaches, holds that **The Prince** of Ezekiel is the Messiah serving in his “dual role” of king and high priest. A closer look at these claims will note their flaws and demonstrate how to defeat them.

- ✞ **Missionary Claim: The Prince of Ezekiel 40-48 is not the Messiah**. To support this claim, missionaries misuse passages from Jeremiah, Zechariah, and Daniel to reach the conclusion that the Messiah will build the Temple in Jerusalem (which happens to be a true messianic prophecy), and the conclusion that the Messiah will be king over the entire earth (which happens to be a false statement). They then "quote" Ezekiel 37:24-25 and identify the shepherd, king, and prince as all pointing to the Messiah, who will be from the line of David. But, this shepherd/king/prince is different from **The Prince** described in Ezekiel 40-48, because he is also identified as Jesus, who is part of the Christian godhead.

  As for **The Prince** of Ezekiel 40-48, missionaries "quote" Ezekiel 45:8-9, a passage that allegedly teaches there are 12 princes, one for each of the

tribes of Israel. They justify this interpretation by the fact that the plural, "princes" is used and, therefore, not only are there 12 of them, but they are not even "royal princes", i.e., sons of kings. Using a Christian lexicon definition (e.g., Strong's Concordance), they conclude that these "princes" are simply governors or officials and, therefore, **The Prince** of Ezekiel 40-48 cannot possibly be the Messiah; rather, he is a governor or official. Consequently, the one legitimate eternal ruler over Israel, Jesus, cannot be the same as **The Prince**.

✡ **Jewish Response: This missionary claim is beleaguered by serious problems.** Perhaps the overarching issue here is that the proponents of this view do not have even a perfunctory knowledge and understanding of the Hebrew language, so that their interpretations suffer from "*contamination through mistranslation*". Moreover, the missionary perspective is colored by Christological biases, e.g., that the Messiah will also be a deity, which, in and of themselves, are contrary to what the` Hebrew Bible teaches.

The detailed analysis in this presentation should leave no doubt in the mind of an objective reader that Ezekiel's applications of the noun נָשִׂיא, **a prince**, together with the definite article הַ (***ha***), **the**, and combinations of prepositions such as וְ (***v***[e]), **and**, and לַ (***la***), **for the/to the**, all point to *the same* individual, unless specifically identified otherwise (e.g., Zedekiah in Ezekiel 12:10, etc.). This applies not only to the applications in the last nine chapters, but also in the other two quoted messianic passages, Ezekiel 34:24-25 & 37:23-24, in which this term, נָשִׂיא, occurs.

The argument by missionaries claiming that **The Prince** of Ezekiel 40-48 is but a governor or official, and not the king, demonstrates both their ignorance of the Hebrew language and how misleading reliance on Christian sources can be, as well as their lack of knowledge of what the Hebrew Bible teaches.

The following passage is employed by missionaries to promote this claim, but in an accurate translation from the Hebrew:

> **Ezekiel 45:8-9 – (8) In the land he [The Prince] shall have it for a possession in Israel; and My Princes (נְשִׂיאַי [*n*[e]*siAI*]) shall no longer cheat My people; and the [rest of] the land they shall give to the House of Israel according to their tribes. (9) So said the Lord God: "Enough, O Princes of (נְשִׂיאֵי [*n*[e]*siEI*]) Israel; put away violence and plunder, and perform justice and righteousness; remove your evictions from My people," says the Lord God.**

Who is speaking here? Who are these individuals, נְשִׂיאַי, **My Princes**, to whom the speaker is referring? The answers to these questions are realized when one understands who selects the kings of Israel and who appoints other leaders of lower rank. The Torah specifies who selects the monarchs:

> **Deuteronomy 17:15 - You shall surely set over yourself a king whom the Lord, your God, shall choose; from among your brethren shall you set king over yourself; you may not place over yourself a foreign man, one who is not your brother.**

Leaders of lower ranks are selected through a different process, as the following example demonstrates:

> **Exodus 18:25 - And Moses chose able men from all Israel, and made them chiefs over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.**

Clearly, the reference in Ezekiel 45:8 to, נְשִׂיאַי, **My princes**, is by God to His princes, those selected by Him as (past and future) kings of (a united) Israel. Whereas the reference in Ezekiel 45:9, נְשִׂיאֵי, **princes of …**, is an exhortation that is based on the past evil acts of some of the **kings of** Israel and Judah.

Conclusion: This missionary claim has no basis in the Hebrew Bible.

✞ **Missionary Claim: The Messiah will not have progeny (i.e., real offspring).** Missionaries state outright that the Messiah will not have sons, since they hold, albeit falsely, that the passage Ezekiel 37:24-25 implies that the rights to the throne of David ends in him. According to Christian theology, Jesus was/is the Messiah. As such, there can be no other kings to follow him, and he will be the eternal king in the messianic kingdom.

Using this as a given fact, they then argue that the mere mention of בָּנִים, **sons** of **The Prince**, in Ezekiel 46:16 proves that **The Prince** is not the Messiah.

✡ **Jewish Response: This missionary claim is beleaguered by serious problems.** As with the previous claim, the main flaw with this claim is the fact that, instead of using the Hebrew Bible, missionaries use translations that are corrupted by Christological biases based on the New Testament, and which contradict what the Hebrew Bible teaches.

This missionary claim is problematic because it rests on two false premises. First, that **The Prince** in Ezekiel 37:24-25 is distinct from **The Prince** in Ezekiel 40-48. The contrary was already demonstrated earlier in this essay. And second, that the Davidic dynasty will end with the Messiah who will live and reign forever. Since the exact nature of the Messiah is not made clear in the Hebrew Bible, it is not possible to reach such a conclusion. According to the Hebrew Bible and traditional Judaism, the Messiah will possess the following attributes:

- ✡ **He will be the seed (a biological descendant) of King David, through King Solomon (e.g., 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Is 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5, 30:9, 33:15; Ezekiel 34:23-24, 37:24)**
- ✡ **He will be spiritual and political leader (e.g., Isaiah 2:3, 11:2; Daniel 7:14)**
- ✡ **He will be married and have children during his term (e.g., Ezekiel 46:16-17)**

Consequently, there is no basis for the assumption that the promised Jewish Messiah will occupy the Davidic throne forever.

Conclusion: This missionary claim has no basis in the Hebrew Bible.

V. SUMMARY

A detailed analysis of the language used by the Prophet Ezekiel helps identity the person to which he referred as **The Prince** in the last nine chapter of his Book. **The Prince** turns out to be the promised **Jewish Messiah**.

The analysis also demonstrates the importance of having a thorough knowledge and understanding of the Hebrew language and of the Hebrew Bible when trying to study the Hebrew Scriptures and answer difficult questions concerning any subject therein. Moreover, this sort of knowledge is most important when one is confronted with claims by missionaries, particularly those which may appear to be plausible to those who lack the proper knowledge of Judaism, of the Hebrew language, and of the Hebrew Bible.

THE "SEED OF A WOMAN": A KERNEL OF DECEPTION[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of the "Virgin Birth" is a foundational "building block" of Christian theology since it "touches" the other important doctrinal elements of Christianity by virtue of the fact that, for Christians, it establishes the deity of Jesus and confirms his identity as the divine "Son of God", i.e., "God manifest in the flesh".

According to Christian missionaries, the Christian messianic vision starts near the beginning of the Christian "Old Testament" in the Christian Bible, at Genesis 3:15. They use this passage as one of several so-called "proof texts" of the "Virgin Birth" of Jesus, and with which they attempt to create a Christian messianic scenario that includes a Messiah who is sinless and divine, and who will eventually defeat Satan and toss him into a place of eternal torment and suffering (see Revelation 20:10), thereby purging all evil from the world.

In this essay, Genesis 3:15 is subjected to a detailed analysis, which will demonstrate that this is not a messianic prophecy, and that such claims are false.

II. THE VERSE GENESIS 3:15

Table II-1 shows side-by-side English renditions and the Hebrew text of the verse Genesis 3:15. The King James Version (KJV) translation includes references to two relevant passages in the New Testament. [These referential notations are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB). The corresponding passages quoted below the table are from the KJV.]

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:
- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "<u>h</u>"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

Table II-1 – Genesis 3:15 in Hebrew text, Jewish translation, and KJV translation

Source	Passage Citation	Text
תנ״ך **[T^{e}NACH – Hebrew Bible]**	בראשית ג,טו	וְאֵיבָה ׀ אָשִׁית בֵּינְךָ וּבֵין הָאִשָּׁה וּבֵין זַרְעֲךָ וּבֵין זַרְעָהּ הוּא יְשׁוּפְךָ רֹאשׁ וְאַתָּה תְּשׁוּפֶנּוּ עָקֵב׃
Author's Translation from the Hebrew	**Genesis 3:15**	And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; they [*literally* he] will strike your head, and you will strike their [*literally* his] heel.
King James Version "Old Testament"	**Genesis 3:15**	And I will put enmity[i] between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head[ii], and thou shalt bruise his heel.

(i) Revelation 12:17(KJV) - And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

(ii) Romans 16:20(KJV) - And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

In general, the two English translations are consistent. Several corresponding key terms and phrases in the three versions are shown in highlighted form and are discussed in detail in the analysis that follows. [It is interesting to note that the woman's seed is referred to in the neuter gender, i.e., as an "it", by the KJV.]

III. THE CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON GENESIS 3:15

According to the Christian point-of-view, this verse is special because it points to Jesus as being the **seed of a woman** (Eve), i.e., the reference here is to a "spiritual child" rather than to a biological descendant, and that he will defeat (i.e., kill) Satan (of whom the serpent is the metaphorical representation). This interpretation originates in the writings of the apostle Paul, who (incorrectly) expounds on the word "seed", as shown in the following example:

> **Galatians 3:16(KJV) – Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.**

The Christian missionaries concede the fact of nature that it is the man, not the woman, who passes on the seed, and genealogies in the "Old Testament" are listed through the man, but they point out how Genesis 3:15 specifically refers to the "seed of a woman". They claim this situation must have special significance, and that it can only point to Jesus, who was the "seed of a woman", since he had no earthly father per the accounts in the New Testament. According to the Christian view, the Creator placed the primary responsibility for the disobedience in the Garden of Eden on the man, thereby also making the man the one who passes the sinful nature to his progeny. Thus, being conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of a virgin was the only way for Jesus to be born sinless and without the sinful nature.

In terms of Christian theology, this verse is essential to the understanding of the concept that the impact of the "Fall of Man", which introduced death to mankind, would be undone by a Messiah who is this singular "seed of a woman", and who would bring salvation to both Jews and Gentiles. Thus, according to the Christian perspective, this passage is a "messianic prophecy".

IV. THE JEWISH PERSPECTIVE OF GENESIS 3:15

The Jewish interpretation of Genesis 3:15 follows the plain reading[2] of the verse, in context, and it is based on the following ideas:

- ✡ **The *woman* (Eve) is the female progenitor of mankind. [The Jewish Sages accept the notion that homo-sapiens existed before Adam & Eve, but that these were not endowed with the soul that God breathed into Adam's nostrils which, in a sense, renders them as being sub-humans, or of the animal kingdom].**
- ✡ **The *enmity* between snake and man, from mankind's perspective, stems from the fact that in general, snakes are pests, even dangerous pests. From a snake's perspective, it is an animal without the ability to reason and, thus, it acts on natural instincts – it must eat to survive, and its main job is to look for sustenance while protecting itself from predators.**
- ✡ **The respective references to *seed*, i.e., offspring, point to mankind relative to Eve, and the family of snakes relative to the serpent.**

This is not a messianic prophecy by any stretch of the imagination. Nothing in this verse refers explicitly to מָשִׁיחַ (***mashi'ah***), **Messiah**, other than in the generic sense, that מָשִׁיחַ will be a human being who is a descendant of Adam and Eve. Other than that, this verse describes the general notion that people will have an aversion for snakes and hit them in the head, while snakes will bite people in their feet.

V. ANALYSIS OF GENESIS 3:15

Biologically it is, of course, a fact of nature that the male, not the female, passes the seed. The Hebrew Bible does not contain a single case were this law of nature is violated. Moreover, the concept of "seed of a woman" is not unique to Genesis 3:15; consequently, there is nothing special about the appearance of this phrase here.

The Hebrew text in Table II-1 contains four highlighted Hebrew words and their corresponding English renditions by the author and by the KJV. The first two of these Hebrew words are inflected forms of the noun זֶרַע (***zEra***), and the remaining two are the Hebrew pronouns אַתָּה (***aTAH***), **you**, and הוּא (***HU***), **he**.

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[2] The methodology of Jewish biblical interpretation consists of four levels: **plain** (פְּשָׁט - ***PSHAT***), **symbolic** (רֶמֶז - ***REmez***), **homiletic** (דְּרוּשׁ - ***DRUSH***), and **mystical** (סוֹד - ***SOD***). These four levels are commonly referred to by their Hebrew acronym פרד״ס (pronounced as ***parDES***).

A. A primer on the Hebrew noun זֶרַע

The Hebrew noun זֶרַע is a compound noun, i.e., it can be used both as singular and as plural, depending on the context of a passage. This term appears in the Hebrew Bible, in various inflections and combinations, 230 times (229 Hebrew, 1 Aramaic). Table V.A-1 shows the various meanings this noun has.

Table V.A-1 – Applications of the noun זֶרַע in the Hebrew Bible

Hebrew Term	Meaning	#	Sample Citation
זֶרַע	Part of a plant's fruit from which a new plant will grow	27	Genesis 1:11
	The sowing season	2	Genesis 8:22
	Field crops and grain	11	Genesis 47:24
	Progeny/Offspring	**182**	**Genesis 7:3**
	Semen	8	Leviticus 15:32

An interesting fact about the way in which the noun זֶרַע is used in the Hebrew Bible, to be illustrated later, is that, when applied in reference to generic offspring, the term is implicitly plural in context, which is similar to compound nouns in the English language, such as chicken, hair, and others. Yet, where it concerns an explicitly identified offspring, the term is used strictly in the singular context. Another interesting fact is that, when זֶרַע is used in reference to children in the Hebrew Bible, it exclusively refers to progeny, i.e., biological descendants.

The above explanation implies that, in Genesis 3:15, the Hebrew expression זַרְעָהּ, **her seed**, is a generic reference to mankind since it speaks here of Eve's descendants. Thus, a plurality is understood since there is no explicit reference to any one specific individual and, consequently, the pronoun "they" should be used instead of the pronoun "he" in an English translation of this verse.[3]

To facilitate the discussion of some relevant Hebrew terminology, several inflections of the noun זֶרַע are shown in Table V.A-2. These terms are relevant to Genesis 3:15 and to the analysis that follows.

[3] At least one Jewish translation does it this way: *JPS HEBREW-ENGLISH TANAKH*, p. 6, The Jewish Publication Society [2000].

Table V.A-2 – The noun זֶרַע and some of its inflected forms

Hebrew Root Noun			
זֶרַע			
Relevant Inflected Forms of זֶרַע			
Hebrew Term	**Transliteration**	**Inflection**	**Meaning**
זַרְעֲךָ	*zar'aCHA*	2nd person, singular, masculine	your seed
זַרְעֵךְ	*zar'ECH*	2nd person, singular, feminine	your seed
זַרְעָהּ	*zar'AH*	3rd person, singular, feminine	her seed

As was noted above, Genesis 3:15 is not the only passage in the Hebrew Bible where the notion of "seed of a woman" is utilized. The remaining passages in the Hebrew Bible that include this concept and are similar to Genesis 3:15 in their syntax help illustrate the dual application of the noun זֶרַע described above. For convenience, these passages are arranged in two distinct categories.

1. Category 1: Passages that demonstrate the generic application of זֶרַע

The passages in the Hebrew Bible that fall into this category utilize the notion of the "seed of a woman" in the generic sense, where no specific offspring or descendant is clearly identified in the surrounding text.

- Hagar, Sarah's maidservant and Abraham's concubine, receives this blessing:

> **Genesis 16:10 - And the angel of the Lord said to her [Hagar], "I will greatly increase your seed [זַרְעֵךְ] and they will not be counted for abundance."**

Context: This verse refers to *no specific person*. Rather, the reference here is to *a multitude of people* - those emerging from Ishmael.

- Rebecca, Isaac's future wife, receives the following blessing:

> **Genesis 24:60 - And they blessed Rebecca and said to her, "May you come to be thousands of myriads, and may your seed [זַרְעֵךְ] inherit the gate of his foes."**

Context: This verse refers to *no specific person*. Rather, the reference here is to *a multitude of people* (those who will issue from Esau and Jacob). In fact, compare the wording of this verse to Genesis 22:17 below, where the same terminology (in Hebrew) is used regarding what the "seed" (of Abraham) will accomplish, clearly indicating a plurality:

> **Genesis 22:17 - That in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed [זַרְעֲךָ] as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and your seed [זַרְעֲךָ] shall possess the gate of his enemies;**

- The next example demonstrates a situation of the absence of the "seed of a woman", where a childless daughter of a priest may return to live in her father's house and partake of his bread:

  > **Leviticus 22:13 - But if the priest's daughter is a widow, or divorced, and has no offspring [זֶרַע] and has returned to her father's house, as in her youth, she shall eat of her father's bread; but no stranger shall eat of it.**

  Context: This verse refers to *a woman without children*, i.e., it refers to *the absence of offspring without specifying their number*.

- Elkanah and his wife, Hannah, receive the following blessing from Eli the Priest to "compensate" for dedicating their firstborn, Samuel, to serve God:

  > **1Samuel 2:20-21 – (20) And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said: "The Lord give you seed [זֶרַע] of this woman for the loan which is lent to the Lord." And they went to their own home. (21) So the Lord visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bore three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the Lord.**

  Context: Verse 20 refers to *no specific person*. Rather, the reference here is to *the five additional children* (not any specific one of them) that she bore after the birth of Samuel, as noted in verse 21.

- A final example contains a metaphorical reference, albeit one that perfectly fits the grammatical and conceptual construct:

  > **Isaiah 54:3 - For you [Zion] will burst out to the right and to the left; and your seed [זַרְעֵךְ] will inherit nations, and they will settle desolate cities.**

  Context: This verse refers to *no specific person*. Rather, the reference here is to *an entire nation* (Israel), clearly implying a plurality.

2. Category 2: Passages that demonstrate the specific application of זֶרַע

This category of passages in the Hebrew Bible utilizes the concept of the "seed of a woman", but in a different way – in the singular sense, where a specific offspring or descendant is clearly identified in the surrounding text.

- When Eve gives birth to Seth following the loss of Abel she says:

  > **Genesis 4:25 - And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, for "God has provided me [Eve] another seed [זֶרַע] in place of Abel, for Cain had killed him."**

  Context: This verse refers specifically to *Seth*.

- Hannah prays to be able to bear a son:

  > **1Samuel 1:11 – She [Hannah] made a vow and said, "Lord, Master of Legions, if You take note of the suffering of Your maidservant, and You remember me, and do not forget Your maidservant, and give Your maidservant male offspring**

[זֶרַע אֲנָשִׁים, *ZEra anaSHIM*], then I shall give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and a razor shall not come upon his head."

<u>Context</u>: This verse refers specifically to *the (future) prophet Samuel*, who is named later in the same chapter:

<u>1Samuel 1:20</u> – And in due course, Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel, "For I have asked him of the Lord".

3. What about Genesis 3:15?

Into which of these two categories does Genesis 3:15 fit? In other words, does Genesis 3:15 belong in the group characterized by the applications of the noun זֶרַע in Genesis 16:10, 24:60, Leviticus 22:13, 1Samuel 2:20-21, and Isaiah 54:3 – verses that clearly and unambiguously (at least in the Hebrew text) refer to unidentified multitudes of humans? Or, does Genesis 3:15 belong in the group characterized by the applications of the noun זֶרַע in Genesis 4:25 and 1Samuel 1:11 – each of which clearly and unambiguously (at least in the Hebrew text) refers to a specific individual (Biblical personality) that is identified, by name, nearby?

The examples given above clearly demonstrate that the verse Genesis 3:15 belongs in Category 1, along with the other examples in which the application of זֶרַע is in the generic plural sense.

<u>Conclusion</u>: The verse Genesis 3:15 belongs in Category 1. Therefore, the respective applications of the Hebrew noun זֶרַע to the woman (Eve) and to the serpent are references to their generic descendants and do not serve as "pointers" to any specific person or entity.

B. A common Christian claim

Christian missionaries use the wording of Genesis 3:15, where the singular pronouns "he" [הוּא; in reference to Eve's seed] and "you" [אַתָּה; in reference to the serpent's seed] are applied, to defend the Christian perspective.

- ✞ **<u>Missionary Claim:</u>** The text shows that the verse speaks of an individual in each case – the "he" ("it" in the KJV) refers to the Messiah, and the "you" refers to Satan.
- ✡ **<u>Jewish Response:</u>** This would have been a reasonable argument against including Genesis 3:15 in Category 1, were it not for the ubiquity of the two pronouns, הוּא and אַתָּה, in the Hebrew Bible, and the fact they are used interchangeably in both the singular and plural context, i.e., as "he" and (singular) "you" as well as "they" and [plural] "you". Although the singular applications are the most common ones found for both pronouns, the plural applications are present throughout the Hebrew Bible as well.

Two of many examples (in the Torah) where הוּא is in the plural context:

Exodus 1:10 – Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it may come to pass, that, when there would be any war, they too [גַּם-הוּא (*GAM-HU*)] should join our enemies, and fight against us; and so get them out of the land.

Numbers 22:3 - Moab became terrified of the people, for they were numerous [רַב הוּא (*RAV HU*)], and Moab became disgusted because of the children of Israel.

Two of many examples (in the Torah) where אַתָּה is in the plural context:

Exodus 33:3 - To a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in the midst of you since you are a stiff-necked people [עַם קְשֵׁה עֹרֶף אַתָּה (*AM qSHEH oref ATAH*)]; lest I consume you in the way.

Deuteronomy 7:6 - For you are a holy people [עַם קָדוֹשׁ אַתָּה (*AM qaDOSH ATAH*)] to the Lord, your God: the Lord your God has chosen you to be His treasured people, out of all the peoples upon the face of the earth

Passages such as the above clearly demonstrate the plural application of the singular Hebrew pronouns הוּא, **he**/**they**, and אַתָּה, **[sing.] you**/**[pl.] you**, and these add credence to the correct translation of Genesis 3:15, the one using "they" and the implicit [plural] "you".

Conclusion: The verse Genesis 3:15 is not a messianic prophecy!

VI. SUMMARY

The application in Genesis 3:15 of the term זַרְעָהּ, **her seed**, refers to Eve's generic descendants, i.e., humanity, since, according to the account of Creation in Genesis, Adam and Eve are considered as the progenitors of all of us. To accept and believe the claim that Genesis 3:15 is a "messianic prophecy", that the "seed of Eve" referred to therein can be distinctly and unambiguously identified as pointing to a specific individual, Jesus, requires an incredible quantum leap of faith and ignoring the facts.

Within the realm of Jewish theology, this verse could certainly be understood to eventually include מָשִׁיחַ at some point in the human chain of genealogies, since according to the Hebrew Bible he is expected to be a flesh and blood human being, a descendant of King David and, thus, a descendant of Adam and Eve as well. But this is in no way a unique identification and pointer to מָשִׁיחַ, to that specific individual whose coming is foretold in the Hebrew Bible.

GENEALOGICAL SCAMS AND FLIMFLAMS[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

Christian missionaries have been placing a lot of emphasis on the messianic significance of genealogies – the two genealogies recorded in the New Testament and carefully selected genealogical data from the "Old Testament" (the Christian version of the Hebrew Bible), and other sources. Their intent is to focus one's attention on declarations made in the New Testament concerning Jesus being the Messiah and on the arguments to support it drawn from so-called Scriptural evidence found in both the New Testament and the "Old Testament".

In this essay, various Christian missionary claims and arguments are examined, primarily those claims that are based on information drawn from the "Old Testament". The analysis demonstrates that such claims are not supported by the Hebrew Bible and, therefore, have no validity for Jews.

II. THE TWO GENEALOGIES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Christian messianic paradigm is founded on two genealogies recorded for Jesus in the New Testament. Though the genealogical information recorded in the New Testament is irrelevant to Judaism, some observations are helpful in assessing its general validity. One genealogy appears in the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 1:2-16), and Christians agree that it depicts the lineage of Jesus through Joseph. The other genealogy is found in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 3:23-38), but there is no consensus among Christians on whether it represents the lineage of Jesus through Mary, or another lineage through Joseph.

Several characteristics of these two genealogies are worth noting:

- ✞ The genealogy recorded in the Gospel of Matthew runs forward in time from Abraham to Jesus, and is divided into three series of 14 generations each, totaling 41 generations.[2]

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:

- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "h̲"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

The first, and earliest series in time, spans 14 generations - from Abraham to David; the second series spans 14 generations - from Solomon to Jechonias; and the third series spans 14 generations - from Jechonias to Jesus.

- ✞ The genealogy recorded in the Gospel of Luke runs backward in time from Jesus to God [sic][3], and is divided into four series. The first, and latest series in time, spans 21 generations - from Jesus to Zorobabel; the second series spans 21 generations - from Salathiel to Nathan; the third series spans 14 generations - from David to Abraham; and the fourth series spans 21 generations from Thare to God, where it concludes with:

  Luke 3:38(KJV) – Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.

  It is interesting to note here that the author makes no distinction between the son of a mortal man and the son of God.

- ✞ The Matthew genealogy ends this way:

  Matthew 1:15-16(KJV) – (15) And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; (16) And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

  The last verse seems to have been carefully constructed to "set the stage" for the later narrative of the allegedly miraculous "Virgin Birth" of Jesus (Matthew 1:18-25).[4]

- ✞ The Luke genealogy starts this way:

  Luke 3:23-24(KJV) – (23) And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli, (24) Which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Janna, which was the son of Joseph,

  The first verse seems to have been carefully fashioned to "harmonize" it with the earlier narrative of the allegedly miraculous "Virgin Birth" of Jesus (Luke 1:26-35).

In Section IV below, the segments that start with King David and end with Jesus, and which pertain to the focus of this essay, the Messiah's lineage, are provided in tabular form (Table IV.A-1) and analyzed in detail.

III. Going Back to Basics: The Most Elementary Jewish Messianic Concepts

A messianic vision is an original concept that is at the heart of traditional Judaism, and the dream of an eventual redemption is one of its foundations. The Hebrew phrase אַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים (***a<u>h</u>arit ha'yamim***), **the end of days**, that is often associated with a future blissful era known in Judaism as the "messianic era", appears in the

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[2] A superficial count shows 42 generations. Since Jechonias is listed twice, he appears last in the second series of 14 generations and first in the third series of 14 generations, there are only 41 generations.
[3] Author's explanatory note: The notation **[sic]** is generally used in written texts to indicate that the previous word or phrase exactly reproduces the original, which may be an unusual form or even an error. In this particular case, the word "God" is used as it appears in the King James Bible.
[4] It is interesting to note that some ancient sources assert that Joseph was the one who "begot" Jesus, i.e., that he was the biological father of Jesus (Geza Vermes, <u>*Jesus the Jew*</u>, pp. 216-217, Fortress Press (1981).

Hebrew Bible as early as Genesis 49:1, where Jacob summons his sons in order to bestow his blessings upon them. This chapter and the blessing of Judah, the father of the commanding Tribe of Israel, in particular (Genesis 49:8-12), could be viewed as the cornerstone of traditional Judaism's messianic paradigm. In his blessing of Judah Jacob said:

> **Genesis 49:10 - The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff, until Shiloh come, and to him shall gather the nations.**

Though there are several different translations and interpretations of the term שִׁילֹה (***shiLOH***) by both ancient and modern Jewish Sages, they all involve messianic notions. However, these are beyond the scope of this essay and will not be discussed herein. The closing phrase in the blessing given to Judah defines the role of מָשִׁיחַ (***maSHI'ah***), the promised **Jewish Messiah**, in the world. Ultimately, his job is to gather the nations under the banner of the One God of peace. If a gathering of the nations for the sake of peace is the first explicit description of the messianic era, it clearly suggests something that is natural, recognizable, and human.

With Judah's destiny defined, one can expect the next significant messianic statement to be made during the reign of King David, the first king of Israel out of the Tribe of Judah. Sure enough, the Davidic dynasty, from which מָשִׁיחַ is to emerge, was established when the prophet Nathan conveyed to David the following promise from God:

> **2Samuel 7:12-16 – (12) When your days are fulfilled, and you shall lie with your forefathers, then I will raise up your seed that shall issue from your body after you, and I will establish his kingdom. (13) He shall build a house for My Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. (14) I will be to him a father, and he shall be to Me a son; so that when he goes astray I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with afflictions of human beings. (15) And My mercy shall not depart from him; in the manner in which I withdrew it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. (16) And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you; your throne shall be established forever.**

This promise includes the following elements:

- ✡ An everlasting dynasty, the Davidic dynasty, is established with David
- ✡ David's heir to the throne, through whom this dynasty shall pass, will be one of his natural (biological) sons
- ✡ The son who inherits the throne from David is the one who will build the Temple in Jerusalem
- ✡ The Davidic dynasty will propagate through David's seed (זֶרַע [***ZEra***]), i.e., via his direct descendants
- ✡ Every future king who sits upon the throne of David will be a mortal man
- ✡ Every future king who sits upon the throne of David will have a special "father-son" relationship with God, so that when he sins, he will be duly punished
- ✡ Even when future kings (in David's seat) commit iniquity, God will keep the Davidic dynasty intact, and not terminate it as He did with Saul's kingship

The promise, although rather comprehensive, <u>does not include</u> these elements:

- ⃠ The throne of David will always be occupied by a reigning king
- ⃠ A special future king (in David's seat) will be fathered by someone who is not a direct descendant of David
- ⃠ A special future king (in David's seat) will be conceived by and born to a virgin who will remain a *virgo intacta* throughout the full term of her pregnancy
- ⃠ A special future king (in David's seat) will be a deity, and even share a triune godhead with God
- ⃠ A special future king (in David's seat) will be born and remain forever free of sin
- ⃠ A special future king (in David's seat) will preside over a heavenly, not an earthly kingdom
- ⃠ A special future king (in David's seat) will "build" a heavenly, not an earthly Temple

Several of these elements will be applied to the analysis of Christian missionary claims in the next section of this essay.

IV. CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY CLAIMS CONCERNING MESSIANIC LINEAGE

Popular Christian missionary claims about the lineage of the Messiah abound, and new claims continue to surface as existing ones are refuted. The following analysis demonstrates that the arguments being used to justify Jesus as a bona fide heir to the throne of David do not survive under rigorous scrutiny.

A. Genealogical myths: Whose genealogies are these anyway?

The two genealogies recorded in the New Testament share a common span of time with the genealogies listed in 1Chronicles 3 of the Hebrew Bible. This makes it possible to compare the data in these two sources. Specifically, since the Hebrew Bible generally provides only genealogies that reflect biological descent, it is reasonable to compare David's progeny, as recorded in 1Chronicles 3:5-24(JPT – Judaica Press Tanach), with the genealogy listed in Matthew 1:6-16(KJV). To facilitate further comparisons, Table IV.A-1 also includes the genealogy listed in Luke 3:23-31(KJV). For simplicity, the names used in the genealogy from the Hebrew Bible are the anglicized rather than phonetic Hebrew renditions.

Table IV.A-1 – Comparing Genealogies: Hebrew Bible vs. New Testament

Hebrew Bible			New Testament*			
#	**1Chronicles 3:5-24(JPT)**	**Remarks**	#	**Matthew 1:6-16 (KJV)**	#	**Luke 3:23-31 (KJV)**
1.	**David**		**1.**	**David**	**1.**	**David**
2.	**Solomon**	Also listed as David's sons by Bathsheba are: Nathan, Shimea, Shovav.	2.	**Solomon**	2.	**Nathan**
3.	Rehoboam		3.	Roboam	3.	Mattatha
4.	Abijah		4.	Abiah	4.	Menan
5.	Asa		5.	Asa	5.	Melea
6.	Jehoshaphat		6.	Josaphat	6.	Eliakim
7.	Joram		7.	Joram	7.	Jonan
8.	**Ahaziah**				8.	Joseph
9.	**Joash**				9.	Juda
10.	**Amaziah**				10.	Simeon
11.	Azariah	Also known as Uzziah.	8.	Ozias	11.	Levi
12.	Jotham		9.	Joatham	12.	Matthat
13.	Ahaz		10.	Achaz	13.	Jorim
14.	Hezekiah		11.	Ezekias	14.	Eliezer
15.	Menasseh		12.	Manasses	15.	Jose
16.	Amon		13.	Amon	16.	Er
17.	Josiah		14.	Josias	17.	Elmodam
18.	**Jehoiakim** (changed from **Eliakim** by Pharaoh Necho)	Also listed as Josiah's sons are: Johanan (the firstborn), Mattaniah (also known as Zedekiah, the last king of Judah), and Shallum (also known as Jehoahaz).			18.	Cosam
					19.	Addi
					20.	Melchi
19.	**Jeconiah**	Also listed as a son of Jehoiakim is Zedekiah.	**15.**	**Jechonias**	21.	Neri
20.	**Shealtiel**	Also listed as a son of Jeconiah is Assir.	**16.**	**Salathiel**	**22.**	**Salathiel**
21.	**Pedaiah**	Also listed as Shealtiel's sons are: Malchiram, Shenazar, Jecamiah, Hoshama, and Nedabiah.				
22.	**Zerubbabel**	Also listed as a son of Pedaiah is Shimei.	**17.**	**Zorobabel**	**23.**	**Zorobabel**
23.	Hananiah	Also listed as Zerubbabel's sons are: Meshullam, Ohel, Berechiah, and Hasadiah-Jushab-Hesed.	18.	Abiud	24.	Rhesa
24.	Jeshaiah	Also listed as a son of Hananiah is Pelatiah.	19.	Eliakim	25.	Joanna
25.	Rephaiah		20.	Azor	26.	Juda

26.	Arnan		21.	Sadoc	27.	Joseph
27.	Obadiah		22.	Achim	28.	Semei
28.	Shechaniah		23.	Eliud	29.	Mattathias
29.	Shemaiah		24.	Eleazar	30.	Maath
30.	**Neariah**	Also listed as Shemaiah's sons are: Hattush, Igal, Bariah, and Shaphat.			31.	Nagge
31.	**Elioenai**	Also listed as Neariah's sons are: Hezekiah and Azrikam.			32.	Esli
		Listed sons of Elioenai are: Hodaviahu, Eliashib, Pelaiah, Akkub, Johanan, Dalaiah, and Anani.			33.	Naum
					34.	Amos
					35.	Mattathias
					36.	Joseph
					37.	Janna
					38.	Melchi
					39.	Levi
			25.	Matthan	40.	Matthat
			26.	Jacob	41.	Heli
			27.	<u>**Joseph**</u>	**42.**	<u>**Joseph**</u>
			28.	**Jesus**	**43.**	**Jesus**

* **Bold names** indicate names of special interest. Underlined <u>**bold names**</u> indicate intermediate points of convergence for the two genealogies of the New Testament.

According to Christian theology, Jesus was the promised Messiah. Therefore, it is important to be familiar with the "evidence" offered by the authors of the New Testament in support of this doctrine:

- **The authors of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke refer to Jesus as the *son of David*:**

  <u>**Matthew 1:1(KJV)**</u> **– The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.** [See also Matthew 9:27, 12:23, 15:22, 20:30,31, 21:9,15, 22:42; Mark 10:47,48; Luke 18:38,39]

- **The author of the Gospel of John, and Paul, the author of Romans, 2Timothy, and several other book in the New Testament, refer to Jesus as the being *of the seed of David*:**

  <u>**Romans 1:3(KJV)**</u> **- Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;** [See also John 7:42; 2Timothy 2:8]

If these statements were true, Jesus would have met the requirement stated in the Hebrew Bible, that the Messiah must be a direct descendant of King David.

Consider the two genealogies in the New Testament, which are displayed in the right hand portion of Table IV.A-1, and note the following issues:

✞ **In addition to sharing common start and end points – David, and Jesus, respectively – these two genealogies have three intermediate points at which they converge – Salathiel, Zorobabel, and Joseph.**

This is a rather complex, perhaps impossible, scheme. It should be noted, by contrast, that the 14 generations listed in the first series of the Matthew genealogy (from Abraham through David) match (in reverse order) the 14 generations listed in the third series of the Luke genealogy (from David through Abraham).[5]

✞ **The approximate span of time from the birth of David to the death of Jesus was 1,070 years. This would translate to an average of approximately 38 years per generation for the Matthew genealogy, and about 25 years per generation for the Luke genealogy.**

An increase of 52% in the average generational span for the Matthew genealogy relative to the Luke genealogy or, conversely, a decrease of 34% in the average generational span for the Luke genealogy relative to the Matthew genealogy, is a significant variance that cannot be attributed to chance alone.

✞ **Christians agree that the Matthew genealogy is that of Jesus via Joseph, yet they do not agree on whose the Luke genealogy is. Some say it is Mary's genealogy, even though her name is missing from it; others hold that it is Jesus' lineage via Joseph "by Law", and the Matthew genealogy is his lineage via Joseph "by Nature".**

Complicating the problem of the Luke genealogy leading to David via Nathan and not Solomon is the dilemma for the Luke genealogy being Mary's. According to Torah, Tribal lineage is determined exclusively by the biological (natural) father (e.g., Numbers 1:18). Consequently, female genealogies are irrelevant to bloodline and, in general, are not listed in the Hebrew Bible.

Several serious problems arise from the other claim, that both are genealogies of Jesus – Matthew's being his genealogy "by Nature", and Luke's being his genealogy "by Law":

- **If, according to the New Testament, the Holy Spirit was the natural father of Jesus, then Jesus cannot be the natural son of Joseph; and, since tribal lineage is a blood-right, the claim to David's throne cannot be passed from Joseph to Jesus merely through "adoption".**
- **On the other hand, if Joseph was the natural father of Jesus, then the Curse of Jeconiah (see Sec. IV.C) is passed on from Joseph to Jesus along with the tribal lineage and any other blood-rights and, then too, Jesus would be mortal.**
- **One class of arguments being offered to explain the convergence of the two genealogies at Zorobabel, Salathiel, and Joseph, and ending at Jesus, involves the idea of a "Levirate Marriage" taking place at various points along the way.[6] An**

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[5] These parts are not shown in this essay.

[6] The *Law of Levirate Marriage* is stated in Deuteronomy 25:5-10. This Law states that, when a married man dies and leaves no heirs to carry on his name, and if the deceased has an unmarried brother, then this brother must marry the widow and (attempt to) have children. In the absence of an eligible brother, a close male relative on the father's side may qualify (as was the case of Boaz, a kinsman of Elimelech, who married Ruth [see Book of Ruth]). The first-born son of such a marriage is regarded as if he was the son of the deceased brother, and is named accordingly. It is important to note that, in the case of the two brothers, they must have at least a common father, i.e., they must be paternal brothers. The *Law of Levirate Marriage* does not apply to uterine brothers, i.e., brothers who share only a mother; children born of such a union are considered illegitimate. The *Law of Levirate Marriage* also contains provisions for the

analysis of these arguments reveals that the last such marital union, which resulted in the birth of Joseph, was not a valid "Levirate Marriage".

- **Another class of arguments being offered to explain the convergence of the two genealogies at Zorobabel, Salathiel, and Joseph, and ending at Jesus, combines the notion of a "Levirate Marriage" taking place in the last stage, of which Joseph was the product, with an assumption that the Zorobabel and Salathiel in the Matthew genealogy were different persons from the Zorobabel and Salathiel in the Luke genealogy. In view of the fact that these two names are rare in the Hebrew Bible – they belong to only a single pair of individuals – it is rather unlikely that they represent persons in the Luke genealogy who are different from those bearing the same names in both the Matthew and 1Chronicles 3 genealogies.**

✞ The Matthew genealogy, going forward from David to Zorobabel, does not match the corresponding genealogy recorded in 1Chronicles 3 of the Hebrew Bible. It appears that, in order to create a genealogy that would suit his purpose, the author of the Gospel of Matthew had to take the following actions:

- **Leave out the generations that correspond to Kings Ahazia, Joash, Amaziah, and Eliakim/Jehoiakim.**
- **Leave out the generation that corresponds to Pedaiah, the son of Shealtiel.**
- **Create new names for the generations going forward from Zerubbabel, none of which match the names that appear for the corresponding generations in the genealogy of 1Chronicles 3.**
- **Leave out the generations that correspond to Neariah, the son of Shemaiah, and Elioenai, the son of Neariah.**

✞ The Luke genealogy, going forward from David to Zorobabel, does not match the corresponding genealogy recorded in 1Chronicles 3 of the Hebrew Bible. It appears that, in order to create a genealogy that would suit his purpose, the author of the Gospel of Luke had to take the following actions:

- **Come up with a set of new names except for Shealtiel and Zerubbabel.**
- **Decrease the average generational span to ~25 years relative to the average generational span of ~38 years in the Matthew genealogy, a reduction of ~13 years or ~34%, which is significant.**

Given the choices of genealogies from King David going forward – the two genealogies in the New Testament or the genealogy of 1st Chronicles in the Hebrew Bible – which would you accept as trustworthy and accurate?

It is interesting to note what Paul wrote about genealogies:

> **<u>1Timothy 1:4(KJV)</u> - Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.**
>
> **<u>Titus 3:9(KJV)</u> - But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.**

Perhaps he recognized the problems with the two hopelessly irreconcilable genealogies recorded in the New Testament. He teaches Christians that certain parts of the Bible – the genealogies, which include those of Jesus – are akin to fables and foolish questions, and, therefore, must not be given heed and should

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case when the surviving eligible brother refuses to fulfill his obligation. [Note: The term "***levir***" is a Latin word that means **a husband's brother**, thus it is not used in the Hebrew Bible.]

be avoided, since they raise questions and have no value.[7] Yet, in spite of these admonitions, Christian missionaries persist with their genealogical mind games.

Conclusion: The two genealogies recorded in the New Testament are internally inconsistent and irreconcilable, and significant portions thereof are at variance with corresponding spans listed in the Hebrew Bible. It is, therefore, not possible to rely on the information contained in them, nor is it possible to identify, with any degree of certainty, whose they are.

B. Christian Missionary myths

1. Claim: Jewish genealogical records were destroyed in 70 C.E.

As part of justifying the two genealogies found in the New Testament, Christian missionaries often claim that the source of the information therein were the meticulously kept Jewish genealogical records, which were stored in the Temple in Jerusalem. They go on and claim that these records were destroyed when the Temple was ransacked and burned to the ground by the Romans in the year 70 C.E. Therefore, Christians claim to have at least a semblance of the true genealogical link between Jesus and David, while the Jews, even when they eventually recognize someone as Messiah, will have no genealogical records to furnish as proof that he, indeed, is the Messiah.

✡ Jewish Response:

The problem with this argument is that it is based on a fallacy. The assertion that all genealogical records of the Jewish people were destroyed with the destruction of the Second Temple around 70 C.E. is untrue and unfounded. No such event ever occurred in Jewish history, and there exists neither a credible historian nor any other reliable ancient source to support this claim. The genealogies of the twelve tribes of Israel were not stored in the Temple and, therefore, they could not have been destroyed with it. A majority of the Jewish people did not live in the Land of Israel during the first century C.E., and their genealogical records, if they were maintained and kept, would not have been affected by the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple. Of the estimated six million Jews in the world in 50 C.E., approximately one third lived in the Land of Israel, another one third lived in Egypt (mostly in the populous area around Alexandria), and the rest lived throughout the Roman Empire (primarily in Europe).[8]

Most Jews of modern times do not know their tribal affiliation. The likely reason for this is that today's Jewish people are either descendants of the

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[7] By contrast, has any Jewish Sage ever taught that parts of the Hebrew Bible are not to be heeded and should be avoided and/or ignored?

[8] Taken from p. 62 in *Discovery*, Published by Aish HaTorah (June 1996); Library of Congress Card Catalogue Number 95-80691.

tribes which comprised the Kingdom of Judah (Judah, Levi, and part of Benjamin), or descendants of a major wave of proselytes during the period from around 100 B.C.E. to around 100 C.E. There were, of course, converts to Judaism throughout all of the history in the Common Era (and before), but those were relatively small in numbers. This matter may be turning into a non-issue with today's advances in genetics research, where genetic markers related to tribal affiliation have been discovered, and are in the process of being identified with specific tribes. A genetic marker for Aaron's descendants, the כֹּהֲנִים (***kohaNIM***), **priests**, has also been identified. An amazing fact about these scientific discoveries is that all tribal genetic markers were found to be residing on the Y-chromosome, which is carried only by males.[9] This could serve as scientific confirmation of the part of Jewish Law which states that blood-rights, such as tribal pedigree, priestly descent, and any other lineage-related attributes, are transmitted exclusively from (biological) father to his son(s).

Concerning the matter of known tribal affiliations among the Jewish people, it is worthwhile to comment on the descendants of the Tribe of Levi. There is no segment among the Jewish people whose members are more aware of their tribal affiliation and more mindful to properly transmit and preserve this distinctive ancestry than those from the Tribe of Levi. From Biblical times onward, it has always been of utmost importance for members of the Tribe of Levi to be aware of their unique place and status among the people of Israel. There are numerous distinct laws in the Torah which pertain only to this Tribe, such as a כֹּהֵן (***KOHEN***), **a priest**, may only marry certain women, a כֹּהֵן is prohibited from coming into contact with a dead body, thus barred from attending any part of a funeral service (with some exceptions for immediate family). Also, only descendants from the Tribe of Levi may take part in the ritual Aaronic Priestly Benediction ceremony, where the כֹּהֲנִים bless the congregation by chanting Numbers 6:24-26, performed on every festival in many traditional synagogues throughout the world. The clans from the Tribe of Levi have been known among the Jewish people throughout history.

According to Jewish Law, lineage is passed along exclusively by the (biological) father (e.g., Numbers 1:18), while the identity as a Jew is either transmitted by the mother (Deuteronomy 7:3-4; Ezra 10:2-3) or acquired through proper ritual conversion to Judaism. In this fashion, the priestly lineage is identified (and has, thus, been preserved over history) on the eighth day following the birth of a son of a father who is a כֹּהֵן, when, as part of the circumcision ritual, the child is also given his Hebrew name, to which is appended the Hebrew title הַכֹּהֵן (***ha'KOHEN***), **The Priest**. Similarly, when a son is born of a father who is a לֵוִי (***levi***), **a Levite**, the child's Hebrew name is appended with the Hebrew title הַלֵּוִי (***ha'levi***), **The Levite**. A male descendant of the Tribe of Levi is identified in this manner on all legal Jewish

[9] Males have the X-Y Chromosomes in their DNA; females have the X-X Chromosomes in their DNA.

documents, such as records of birth and death, marriage contracts, and divorce decrees. This custom has been carried on as part of the Jewish tradition since the days in the desert, in accordance with Exodus 40:15. It was well known and well documented among the Jewish people who these individuals were, and this information was carefully passed down from father to son, and often recorded in a family's record book of family genealogy. Nehemiah refers to סֵפֶר הַיַּחַשׂ (***SEfer ha'YA<u>h</u>as***; Nehemiah 7:5) as such a genealogical record, and in Modern Hebrew it is called סֵפֶר יוּחֲסִין (***sEfer yu<u>h</u>asIN***).

<u>**Sidebar Note**</u>**: The role and importance of genealogies in Judaism -** The fact that genealogies are listed in the Hebrew Bible indicates that they had, and still have, a place in Judaism. For instance, as explained above, the proper identification of the descendants from the Tribe of Levi was particularly important since the Priestly and Levitical lines had to be kept pure (Exodus 40:15; Numbers 25:12-13; Ezra 2:61-62).

Christian missionaries insist that, since genealogy was important for the priesthood, the same standard must be applied to the Messiah. The response to this suggestion is simple. Anyone can learn to imitate the rituals that Priests and Levites perform as part of their Temple service and claim to be from the Tribe of Levi. This is why the recorded genealogies are important in validating that people are indeed who they claim to be. On the other hand, as the past 2,000 years have demonstrated, there were many individuals who claimed to be the Messiah, yet they all turned out to be *false messiahs*. Did their respective genealogies disqualify them? No, they did not! What disqualified them was the fact that they failed to fully execute the messianic agenda that is described in the Hebrew Bible.

The promised Jewish Messiah, מָשִׁיחַ, will complete the messianic agenda and bring about the conditions described therein as part of his sovereignty, though some of this will happen prior to his being identified as מָשִׁיחַ. As a human being, מָשִׁיחַ lives/will live in a world of recognizable realities of military requirements and political alignments. He will have to deal with these realities, and emerge victorious within the constraints that they engender.

Will מָשִׁיחַ be required to furnish a certified record of his genealogy as proof that he is a descendant of King David? Will he have to submit himself to a blood test to determine if he is from the Tribe of Judah? This is rather unlikely, since the *litmus test* will be very simple: *Do the conditions described in the messianic agenda exist or not?* The classical quality of the messianic prophecies by the Jewish prophets is that they are <u>exhaustive and exclusive</u>, which means that when they are realized everyone will know it, e.g., when one watches the news program on TV or looks at the front page of a daily newspaper, it will be obvious that a new era has arrived. No faith will be required in order to experience these prophecies when they are fulfilled. Thus, the genealogy of מָשִׁיחַ will be a non-issue, since "*seeing is believing*" will convince everyone that he is the one.

<u>**Conclusion**</u>**: The claim by Christian missionaries that the Jewish genealogies were kept in the Temple in Jerusalem and were destroyed in 70 C.E. is bogus. A related claim, that the two genealogies in the New**

Testament were derived from those records stored in the Temple and are, therefore, the most accurate reference source for the relevant data, has already been proven as false in Section IV.A above.

2. CLAIM: Promises to David's successors were conditional

In order to protect the sanctity and necessity of the "Virgin Birth" in Christian theology, Christian missionaries claim that the successors of King David are ineligible progenitors of מָשִׁיחַ. They argue that, although the promise God made to David was eternal, the promise that He made to David's sons, i.e., to the successors to his throne, was *conditional* and depended on stipulations and contingencies that had to be met. Since Solomon in particular, as well as many of the other kings of Judah, "**did that which was evil before the Lord**", the Messiah of Christianity, who has to be "perfect", i.e., without the "blemish of sin", cannot have an earthly father out of this "tainted" lineage. According to the claim, this unacceptable lineage had to be cut-off or terminated at some point, and this problem was solved through the miracle of a "Virgin Birth".

✡ JEWISH RESPONSE:

Two verses are often cited to support the allegation about the different promises. The first of these is the *unconditional* promise to David:

> **Psalms 132:11 - The Lord has sworn in truth to David, from which He will not turn back, "Of the fruit of your body I shall seat upon your throne."**

This is followed by the alleged *conditional* promise regarding David's descendants:

> **Psalms 132:12 - "IF your sons will keep My covenant, and this, My testimony, that I shall teach them, THEN also their sons will forever sit upon your throne."**

However, there is a problem here – the consequences are for violating the stipulations in Psalms 132:12 are missing. *Is this an open-ended set of conditions, the violation of which will result in unspecified consequences?*

As is often the case, Christian missionaries convey only part of the full story – the portion that suits their claim. Surely, the Hebrew Bible should be more specific here, as it is elsewhere, such as the prophetic passage quoted in Section III, 2Samuel 7:12-16, in which both the promise and consequences of disobedience are specified; other passages in the Hebrew Bible do the same. For instance, regarding the promise to David:

> **Psalms 89:29-30 – (29) "I will forever keep My kindness to him [David], and My covenant will remain true to him. (30) And I shall make his seed endure forever, and his throne like the days of heaven."**

The consequences for not obeying follow the promise:

> **Psalms 89:31-33 – (31) "If his sons will forsake My Torah, and will not walk in My judgments, (32) If they profane My statutes, and do not keep My commandments, (33) Then I shall punish their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with plagues."**

Note the similarity between Psalms 89:33 and 2Samuel 7:14. But wait! There is more. God abounds with kindness, love, and mercy:

> **Psalms 89:34-38 – (34) "And I shall not completely remove My loving kindness from him, and I shall not betray My faithfulness. (35) I shall not profane My covenant, nor shall I alter the utterances of my lips. (36) One thing have I sworn by My holiness - that I would not be deceitful to David. (37) His seed will be forever, and his throne like the sun before Me. (38) Like the moon, which is established forever, and witness in the sky, eternally true."**

Do these proclamations convey the message that the Davidic lineage will be cut-off when David's successors transgress, and that it will resume in the future with a sinless being who is born of a virgin? No, there is no need to speculate about the consequences that accrue for the disobedience that was spoken of in Psalms 132:12; these were already described earlier.

Conclusion: Those Kings of Judah who followed King David and transgressed God's Law were punished as promised. However, the Hebrew Bible reiterates that the Davidic dynasty, from which מָשִׁיחַ will eventually emerge, will not be eliminated. King David was promised that his seed and throne would endure forever. God doesn't lie.

3. Issues concerning Solomon and Rehoboam

✞ Claim: Solomon has been disqualified as the progenitor to מָשִׁיחַ.

Christian missionaries claim that, because he was expected to obey God's Law and failed to do so, Solomon was disqualified from being the forefather of מָשִׁיחַ. *Is this claim a Scriptural fact, or is it fiction?*

✡ Jewish Response:

After relating Solomon's grandeur and successful accomplishments during his early years as King of Israel (1Kings 1:38-10:25), the Hebrew Bible tells of his failures (1Kings 11:1-10). The account starts with his acquisition of many horses – a violation of the prohibition the Torah placed on kings of Israel (Deuteronomy 17:16), it continues with his marriage to many women, likewise a violation of the Biblical prohibition placed upon the kings (Deuteronomy 17:17), many, if not most, of whom were foreign women, yet another violation of a prohibition in the Torah (Deuteronomy 7:3). This is followed by an account of God's anger with Solomon and the consequences:

> **<u>1Kings 11:11-13</u> – (11) And the Lord said to Solomon, "For as this has been with you and you have not observed My covenant and My statutes which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and shall give it to your servant. (12) However, in your days I will not do this, for the sake of David your father; from the hand of your son I shall tear it. (13) But I shall not tear the entire kingdom away from you; one tribe I shall grant to your son for the sake of David My servant, and for the sake of Jerusalem, [the city] which I have chosen.**

This is a severe punishment, indeed, but there is no mention anywhere in the Hebrew Bible of any forfeiting of the right to kingship or disqualification from being the progenitor to מָשִׁיחַ. Even the righteous King David sinned, although not on as grand a scale as did his son Solomon and many of his successors, yet he was promised to be the ancestor of מָשִׁיחַ.

<u>Conclusion</u>: This claim is a bogus issue. According to the Hebrew Bible, the iniquity of Solomon and some of his legitimate successors did not disqualify any of them from being the progenitor to מָשִׁיחַ.

✞ <u>CLAIM</u>: Rehoboam was a Jew via his father, not via his mother.

This issue has been raised by Christian missionaries as a challenge to a rule in Jewish Law, that a person's identity as a Jew is determined either by having a birth mother who is a Jewess or via a formal ritual conversion to Judaism. Christian missionaries claim that, if a person's mother has to be a Jewess to make that person a Jew, then Rehoboam was not a Jew, since his mother, Na'amah the Ammonitess, was not a Jewess, and they cite the following passage in support of this claim:

> **<u>1Kings 14:21</u> - And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah; forty-one years old was Rehoboam when he became king, and seventeen years he reigned in Jerusalem, the city that the Lord has chosen to place His Name there out of all the tribes of Israel; and his mother's name was Na'amah the Ammonitess.**

They argue that, according to Torah, Ammonites and Moabites were not allowed to convert to Judaism:

> **<u>Deuteronomy 23:4</u> - An Ammonite [עַמּוֹנִי (*<u>a</u>MONI*)] and a Moabite [מוֹאָבִי (*mo'AVI*)] shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even their tenth generation shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord forever.**

They correctly note that the Torah requires a king of Israel to be a Jew:

> **<u>Deuteronomy 17:15</u> - You shall surely set over yourself a king whom the Lord, your God, shall choose; from among your brethren shall you set a king over yourself; you may not place over yourself a foreign man, one who is not your brother.**

Therefore, the Christian missionary argument continues, since God would not violate His own rule and place a non-Jew on the throne of David, Rehoboam had to be a Jew, not by his mother, Na'amah the Ammonitess, but by his father, Solomon, the Israelite and Jew.

✡ **JEWISH RESPONSE:**

On the surface, this challenge may appear to be a "slam-dunk" for the Christian missionaries and, hence, for Christian theology. On the one hand, if their claim that one's identity as a Jew is passed by the father were to hold up, they would have demonstrated that the requirement of having a mother that is a Jewess is a later addition to Jewish Law by the Rabbis. On the other hand, if that challenge is defeated, the Christian missionaries may come back and claim that Rehoboam was not a Jew, since his mother was not allowed to convert to Judaism, thus he would be disqualified from having מָשִׁיחַ emerge from his lineage. Since he was the only son of Solomon named in the Hebrew Bible, it would imply that Judaism has on its hands a serious problem with the origin of its Messiah. To remedy this problem, they suggest that the miracle of a "Virgin Birth" was the divine solution to bring forth the Messiah.

In order to deal with this claim, a look beyond the surface in required. The following is stated in the Torah concerning intermarriage with several nations that the Israelites will face upon entering the Promised Land:

> **Deuteronomy 7:3-4 – (3) And you shall not intermarry with them; your daughter you shall not give to his son, and his daughter you shall not take for your son. (4) For he will cause your son to turn away from following Me, and they will serve other gods; then the wrath of the Lord will be kindled against you, and He will soon destroy you.**

The Hebrew wording and the knowledge of Torah are required for the correct understanding of the message these two verses convey. The Torah teaches two important concepts here. On the one hand, with the understanding that the "he" in Deuteronomy 7:4 refers to the Gentile father-in-law, the one referred to as "your son" is the son of the Israelite father, a Jew, who is marrying the daughter of the Gentile father. The verse then states that this Israelite son will "**serve other gods**", which means that any children of this marriage will be Gentiles, following the religious identity of their Gentile mother.

Alternatively, with the understanding that the "he" in Deuteronomy 7:4 refers to the Gentile whom the daughter (a Jewess) of an Israelite father, a Jew, marries, "son" is understood to mean "grandson".[10] So that, by

[10] Given the known fact that the term "son" is used loosely in Semitic languages, so that relationships in many instances cannot always be established with certainty (except where so noted), the term "son" as used here may actually refer to the grandson. Such cases appear elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, e.g.,

calling the "son" of an Israelite mother (a Jewess) and Gentile father the "son" of the Israelite grandfather (a Jew) in Deuteronomy 7:4, it follows that this child was to be regarded as being of the same religious identity as the mother, a Jewess.

In either case, and according to Jewish Law, the child of a father who is a Jew and a mother who is a Gentile follows the religious identity of the mother. Here are several examples from Scripture that support this Law:

> **<u>Exodus 21:4</u> - If his [the Israelite servant's] master has given him a wife, and she has born him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he [the Israelite servant] shall go out by himself.**

According to Torah, an Israelite master may not give an Israelite bondmaid as a wife to someone other than his own son, or take her as a wife for himself (Exodus 21:8-9). Therefore, Exodus 21:4 refers to a Gentile bondmaid given as wife to a Hebrew slave. The children remain slaves when their father is freed, showing that they bear their mother's status.

In the following example, the son of a mother who is a Jewess and a father who is a Gentile is subjected to the Jewish Law as stated in Torah:

> **<u>Leviticus 24:10-16</u> – (10) And the son of an Israelite woman, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the people of Israel; and this son of the Israelite woman and a man of Israel fought in the camp; (11) And the Israelite woman's son blasphemed the Name of the Lord, and cursed. And they brought him to Moses; and his mother's name was Sh^{e}lomit, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan; (12) And they put him in custody, that the will of the Lord might be shown to them. (13) And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, (14) "Bring forth him who has cursed outside the camp; and let all who heard him lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him. (15) And you shall speak to the people of Israel, saying, 'Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin. (16) And he who blasphemes the Name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him; as well the stranger, as he who is born in the land, when he blasphemes the name of the Lord, shall be put to death'."**

While it could be argued that the above example applies to both Jews and Gentiles, the following example clearly demonstrates that the children of fathers who are Jews and mothers who are Gentiles were to be cast out along with their Gentile mothers, to "**be done according to the Torah**":

> **<u>Ezra 10:2-3</u> – (2) And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said to Ezra, "We have trespassed against our God, and have taken foreign wives from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this matter. (3) And now, let us make a covenant with our**

Zechariah is listed as the **son** of Iddo [Ezra 5:1] even though his biological father was Berechiah, who was the biological son of Iddo [Zechariah 1:1]; Zerubbabel is listed as the **son** of Shealtiel [Haggai 1:1], even though his biological father was Pedaiah [1Chronicles 3:17], who was the biological son of Shealtiel.

God to cast out all such women, and those born of them, according to the counsel of the Lord, and of those who hasten [to perform] the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the Torah.

These examples demonstrate the fact that a person's identity as a Jew is determined by the mother, not by the father. Moreover, recent research in genetics has isolated a genetic marker that identifies female Jewish ancestry. This marker resides in the DNA of the female's mitochondria, which scientifically confirms the provisions of Jewish Law. Namely, that this genetic marker is passed exclusively from a mother who is a Jewess to her daughters, thereby making the mother the one who determines the identity as a Jew of her children.

Conclusion: The Hebrew Bible proves that the Christian missionary allegation about Jewish Law having been changed by the Rabbis [from the father determining one's identity as a Jew to the mother determining one's identity as a Jew] is bogus!

This leaves the other side of the missionary argument to be examined, that Rehoboam was not a Jew, since his mother was not allowed to convert to Judaism, thus he was disqualified from having מָשִׁיחַ emerge from his lineage.

Two powerful arguments refute this claim. First, of course, is the Torah requirement that a king of Israel must be a Jew (Deuteronomy 17:15) and, according to 1Kings 11:13, God approved Rehoboam to reign as king. Since God would not break His own rules, it may safely be concluded that Rehoboam was indeed a Jew. Exactly how he acquired his identity as a Jew is not detailed in the Hebrew Bible, and therefore must not be an important piece of information. There are only two options available here – either his mother, Na'amah, converted to Judaism before she bore him, or he himself formally converted to Judaism.

Second, there is Deuteronomy 23:4, according to which an Ammonite and a Moabite are prohibited from converting to Judaism. The Hebrew text uses the terms עַמּוֹנִי and מוֹאָבִי, which translate as **an Ammonite male** and **a Moabite male**, respectively. The corresponding Hebrew terms for females are: עַמּוֹנִית (***a**MONIT*), **an Ammonite female**, and מוֹאָבִית (***mo'a**VIT*) [also מוֹאֲבִיָּה (***mo'avi'**YAH*)], **a Moabite female**. The reason for this prohibition is stated immediately following the prohibition itself:

Deuteronomy 23:5-6 – (5) Because they did not greet you with bread and water on the way, when you left Egypt, and because he [Balak, the King of Moab] hired Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor in Aram Naharaim against you, to curse you. (6) But the Lord, your God, did not want to listen to Balaam; so the Lord, your God, transformed the curse into a blessing for you, because the Lord, your God, loves you.

This prohibition and the reason for it are repeated by Nehemiah:

> **<u>Nehemiah 13:1-2</u> – (1) On that day they read from the Book of Moses in the hearing of the people; and was found written in it that the Ammonite [עַמֹּנִי] and the Moabite [מוֹאָבִי] should never come into the congregation of God; (2) Because they did not meet the people of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them; but our God turned the curse into a blessing.**

Since Ruth was a Moabitess, according to the Christian missionary claim, she could not have converted to Judaism due to the prohibition stated in Deuteronomy 23:4. Given that the mother determines her children's identity as Jews, how could Ruth have become the ancestor of King David, the greatest king of the Jewish people? Clearly, she converted to Judaism, and she indicated her intentions to Naomi, her mother-in-law, when she said to her, "**For where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people are my people, and your God is my God;**" (Ruth 1:16-17). The Sages explain in the Talmud the reason only Ammonite and Moabite males may not convert to Judaism.[11] It is because the man, not the woman, was expected to leave his house and bring food and drink to the sojourner; a woman was not expected to do that for the obvious reason – her personal safety. Accordingly, the interpretation of the law (Deuteronomy 23:4), which had to be rendered by ten elders, is that the prohibition to enter into the assembly of the Lord, i.e., to be admitted into the community of Israel, applies only to Ammonite and Moabite males.

<u>Conclusion</u>: The Christian missionary claim that the prohibition in Deuteronomy 23:4 prevented Na'amah the Ammonitess, Rehoboam's mother, from converting to Judaism is bogus! Na'amah qualified to convert to Judaism just as Ruth the Moabitess, King David's great-grandmother, was able to do it several generations earlier.

C. The Curse on Jeconiah

King **Jehoiachin** of Judah [יְהוֹיָכִין (***y^e^hoyaCHIN***), who is also known by the names, **Jeconiah**, יְכָנְיָה (***y^e^chan'YAH***) and **Coniah**, כָּנְיָהוּ (***con'YAhu***)], was one of the kings of Judah about whom is written that "**he did that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord**", for which his punishment is spelled out in the Hebrew Bible:

> **<u>Jeremiah 22:24-30</u> – (24) "As I live," says the Lord, "even if Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were A SIGNET [חוֹתָם (*<u>H</u>OTAM*)] upon My right hand, I would tear you off. (25) And I will give you to the hand of those who seek your life, and to the hand of those whose face you fear, to the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and to the hand of the Chaldeans. (26) And I will cast you out, and your mother who bore you, to another country, where you were not born; and there shall you die. (27) But to the land to which they desire to return, there shall they not return. (28) Is this**

[11] See Babylonian Talmud Tractate Yevamot, Folio 76b, and Tractate Ketubot, Folio 7b.

man Coniah a despised broken vessel? An object that no one cares for? Why are they cast out, he and his seed, and banished to a land which they know not? (29) O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." (30) Thus says the Lord: "Inscribe this man [Coniah] childless, a man who WILL NOT PROSPER [לֹא־יִצְלַח (*LO*-yi*tzLAH*)] in his days; for no man of his seed shall prosper [לֹא־יִצְלַח], sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah."

This passage, which comes at the end of a chapter where Jeremiah lists a series of judgments against several kings of Judah, Shallum (who is believed to also be Jehoahaz), Jehoiakim, and Coniah, appears to signal the termination of the royal branch through Jeconiah. The judgment that applies specifically to King Jeconiah is known as the *Curse on Jeconiah*.

✞ CLAIM: David's line ended since father-son chain of ascension was broken

Some Christian missionaries seize on this *Curse on Jeconiah* and claim that it, in effect, ended David's royal line. Even though Zedekiah reigned for 11 years following the removal of Jeconiah, they still maintain their claim is valid for two reasons. First, since Zedekiah, Jeconiah's uncle, followed Jeconiah, the usual father-son chain of ascension to the Davidic throne was broken.

✡ JEWISH RESPONSE:

This is a false argument since the promise to King David contains no stipulation that a reigning king's (biological) son will always take over the kingdom from his father. The stated requirement is that a king had to be a direct descendant of King David, via King Solomon. *What would happen in the event that a king did not have any sons? Would this end the promised eternal Davidic dynasty?* Certainly not!

Conclusion: The Christian missionary claim that the break in the common father-to-son progression on the throne of King David when Zedekiah became King of Judah signaled the end of the Davidic dynasty's ability to bring forth מָשִׁיחַ, is not supported in the Hebrew Bible.

✞ CLAIM: David's line ended since the royal seed was eliminated

Second, the missionaries cite the following verse to support their claim that, not only were all the sons of Zedekiah killed, but that the rest of the *royal seed* was eliminated as well:

Jeremiah 52:10(KJV) - And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes: he slew also all the princes of Judah [אֶת־כָּל־שָׂרֵי יְהוּדָה (*ET-KOL-saREI y^ehuDAH*)] in Riblah.

Since, according to this rendition, the entire royal pool of heirs to David's throne was wiped out, the missionaries conclude that the only way the Messiah could

now be brought forth would be via the miracle of a "Virgin Birth", which, according to them, was God's plan from the outset. *Is it true that the natural Davidic lineage ended because of the events at Riblah?*

✡ **JEWISH RESPONSE:**

The answer to this question is provided in the following two sections.

1. Multiple descriptions of the same event

A somewhat different account from that given in its rendition of Jeremiah 52:10 is provided by the KJV in the following passage:

> **Jeremiah 39:6(KJV) – Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes: also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah [אֵת כָּל־חֹרֵי יְהוּדָה (*ET KOL-<u>h</u>OREI y^ehUDAH*)].**

Clearly, both passages describe the same event, and the two Hebrew phrases, אֶת־כָּל־שָׂרֵי יְהוּדָה and אֵת כָּל־חֹרֵי יְהוּדָה, are synonymous. Thus, Jeremiah 52:10(KJV) and Jeremiah 39:6(KJV) are inconsistent. *Which one of these two is consistent with the Hebrew text?*

The Hebrew Bible contains a third passage in which the same event is documented in greater detail:

> **2Kings 25:7,18-21(KJV) – (7) And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon.**
> **(18) And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door: (19) And out of the city he took an officer that was set over the men of war, and five men of them that were in the king's presence, which were found in the city, and the principal scribe of the host, which mustered the people of the land, and threescore men of the people of the land that were found in the city: (20) And Nebuzaradan captain of the guard took these, and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah: (21) And the king of Babylon smote them, and slew them at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah was carried away out of their land.**

The author explicitly identifies those who were slain along with Zedekiah's sons – the noblemen – not all the other princes (the royal seed) of Judah.

Conclusion: Jeremiah 52:10 is mistranslated in the KJV whereas Jeremiah 39:6 is consistent with the Hebrew text.

Evidently, some of the royal seed survived the massacre at Riblah, a fact that is confirmed elsewhere in Hebrew Bible and correctly translated in the KJV:

<u>2Kings 25:22,25(KJV)</u> – (22) And as for the people that remained in the land of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had left, even over them he made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, ruler. …
(25) But it came to pass in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, came, and ten men with him, and smote Gedaliah, that he died, and the Jews and the Chaldees that were with him at Mizpah.

<u>Conclusion</u>: The Christian missionary claim that all eligible heirs to David's throne were wiped out at Riblah is bogus!

It is interesting to note the way another passage that describes Gedaliah’s assassination is rendered in the KJV:

<u>Jeremiah 41:1(KJV)</u> - Now it came to pass in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, and the princes of the king [וְרַבֵּי הַמֶּלֶךְ (*v^e^raBEI ha'MElech*)], even ten men with him, came unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah; and there they did eat bread together in Mizpah.

This account clearly shows that not all royal seed was slain at Riblah. This is consistent with the KJV renditions of Jeremiah 39:6 and 2Kings 25:18-21 and conflicts with the KJV rendition of Jeremiah 52:10.

Christian missionaries do not use Jeremiah 39:6, 41:1, and 2Kings 25:25 to support their claim. Rather, to support their claim, they cite the mistranslated Jeremiah 52:10, as if it were the only recorded account of the event.

<u>Sidebar Note</u>: The possessive plural of the Hebrew noun שַׂר [***SAR***], namely, שָׂרֵי [***saREI***] is rendered as **princes of** by the KJV at Jeremiah 52:10) in the Hebrew Bible. The noun שַׂר appears in the Hebrew Bible 421 times (in the singular, plural, with and without prepositions, and within compound phrases), in various contexts, such as nobleman, official, ruler, commander. There is not a single case in the Hebrew Bible where שַׂר refers to "a royal prince".

<u>Conclusion</u>: The KJV and other Christian translations cannot be relied upon to accurately reflect the Hebrew text of the Hebrew Bible.

2. From which Royal Branch May מָשִׁיחַ Emerge?

Given that Jeconiah's royal branch has been cursed, so that none of his offspring is eligible to sit on the throne of David, and Zedekiah's royal branch appears to have been eliminated by the slaying of his sons at Riblah, from where can מָשִׁיחַ be expected to emerge?

Recall that God's promise to David in 2Samuel 7:12-16 requires the Davidic dynasty to pass through the one son of David who would build the Temple, and this turned out to be Solomon (see 1Kings 8:15-20; 1Chronicles 17:11-15, 22:9-10, 28:3-7). From that point on, no further restrictions are stated

about any one particular royal branch being preferable over another. Thus, מָשִׁיחַ may emerge from *any* royal branch that leads to Solomon.

To help put into perspective the magnitude of the extensive network of royal branches from which מָשִׁיחַ may emerge, data from the Hebrew Bible on four Royal Families of the royal seed of Judah is summarized in Table IV.C.2-1.

<u>Table IV.C.2-1</u> – Biblical statistics concerning four Royal Families

King	# Wives	# Concubines	# Sons	# Daughters	Source/Remarks
Solomon	700	300	1 + ?*	2 + ?	1 Kings 4:11,15, 11:43
Rehoboam	18	60	28	60	2 Chronicles 11:18-22
Abijah	14	?	22	16	2 Chronicles 13:21
Josiah	2	?	4	?	1 Chronicles 3:15
Total	**---**	**---**	**55+?**	**---**	**Sons only**

* A ?-mark indicates the information is not listed in the Hebrew Bible

The following important observations may be drawn from the data in the table:

- ⊙ The only named children of Solomon are his son Rehoboam and daughters Taphat and Basmat. Since it is highly unlikely that only three children would issue from 700 wives and 300 concubines, it is reasonable to conclude that only those who were Jews are accounted for in the Hebrew Bible.
- ⊙ Given that the messianic line must go through Solomon, and Rehoboam is his only named son, it follows that the messianic line *must* pass through Rehoboam.
- ⊙ 55 sons are listed for the four Royal Families. If Rehoboam were taken out of this total, as many as 54 legitimate royal branches that lead to David through Solomon and Rehoboam remain. [Since only a limited amount of additional information is recorded about the various sons, the exact number of royal branches, even for these four Royal Families, cannot be determined. In other words, the Hebrew Bible does not elaborate on what actually occurred with these various persons (whether or not they married, whether or not they left male progeny, etc.) from whom the messianic line leads to Solomon.]

<u>Conclusion</u>: The *Curse on Jeconiah* and the slaughter of Zedekiah's sons at Riblah are moot issues, and have no bearing on the viability of a flesh and blood מָשִׁיחַ sprouting from the seed of David. The lineage of מָשִׁיחַ is not restricted to either of these two allegedly "problematic" branches of monarchs. As has been demonstrated, and according to the Hebrew Bible, מָשִׁיחַ may emerge from *any* royal branch that leads to David through Solomon.

♰ **<u>CLAIM</u>: The *Curse on Jeconiah* was temporary and eventually it was lifted**

Some Christian missionaries take a different approach and argue that the *Curse on Jeconiah* was just a temporary measure that was eventually lifted.[12] Their "end game", however, is similar since they say that no one ruled after Zerubbabel, and argue that the Davidic line ended there, so that the only way to bring forth a Messiah was through the miracle of a "Virgin Birth", which, according to them, was God's plan from the outset.

As support for this paradigm they cite a passage that tells of the release of Jeconiah from his prison cell in Babylon, and his being invited to sit at the head of the table of all the other nations' exiled kings held captive in Babylon:

> **Jeremiah 52:31-34 – (31) And it was in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-fifth day of the month, that Evil-merodach, king of Babylon, in the year of his coronation, lifted up the head of Jehoiachin, king of Judah and released him from prison. (32) And he spoke with him kindly and placed his seat above the seat of the kings who were with him in Babylon. (33) And he changed his prison garb, and he ate meals before him regularly all the days of his life. (34) And his meals, were regular meals given to him from the king of Babylon, each day's need in its day, all the days of his life.** [See also 2Kings 25:27-30.]

This act is claimed as evidence that the proclamation made in the curse, that Jeconiah is "**a man who will not prosper [לֹא־יִצְלַח] in his days**" (Jeremiah 22:30), was reversed.

✡ JEWISH RESPONSE:

A careful reading of the passage reveals that it does not mention anything about Jeconiah actually prospering in his days – the Hebrew phrase for **[he] will not prosper**, לֹא־יִצְלַח, is not countermanded. In fact, Jeconiah never returned to Judah, never returned to sit on the throne of David, and he died in exile, just as was foretold by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 22:27-28).

✞ CLAIM: The *Curse on Jeconiah* was lifted since Zerubbabel ruled Judah

Also offered in support this claim is the idea that Zerubbabel, Jeconiah's great-grandson, prospered and ruled Judah:

> **Haggai 2:23 – "On that day," says the Lord of Hosts, "I will take you, O Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, My servant;" says the Lord, "and I will make you LIKE A SIGNET [כַּחוֹתָם (*ka'hotam*)]; for I have chosen you," says the Lord of Hosts.**

[12] This is a rather curious position, since it is consistent with the opinion of the Sages of the Talmud, that Jeconiah repented while in exile, and that exile atones for all sins (e.g., Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sanhedrin 37b-38a). In this case, the Christian missionaries actually admit, perhaps unwittingly, that the shedding of blood is not required to bring about the remission of sins!

This carefully selected passage is claimed to be messianic since it "connects" with the opening verse in the *Curse on Jeconiah* (Jeremiah 22:24) via the **signet ring**, חוֹתָם, which is claimed to symbolize kingship.

✡ **JEWISH RESPONSE:**

This argument contains major flaws. First, the Haggai passage does not point to the messianic era (the days of the Third Temple). The Hebrew tenses indicate that Zerubbabel has been chosen to do a certain job, and that the will be made like a signet. In Haggai 2:23 the Prophet refers to the previous verses, Haggai 2:20-22, in which he assures Zerubbabel of God's protection, and where he also describes the defeat of the Persian Empire at the hands of the Greeks, an event that occurred not long after this prophecy was spoken

Next, consider the signet ring and its significance throughout the Hebrew Bible. The noun חוֹתָם, **a signet ring**, appears in the Hebrew Bible on 14 instances, none of which imply any connection with being chosen as king or, perhaps, even מָשִׁיחַ (Genesis 38:18; Exodus 28:11,21,36, 39:5,14,30; 1Kings 21:8; Jeremiah 22:24; Job 38:14; Haggai 2:23; Song of Songs 8:6[2x]). This is also the case with the more common noun טַבַּעַת (***taBA'at***), **a (generic) ring**, which appears in the Hebrew Bible on 49 occasions, seven of which are in the context of **a signet ring** (Genesis 41:42; Esther 3:10,12, 8:2,8[2x],10). Genesis 41:42 and Esther 8:2 clearly demonstrate that ***a signet ring symbolizes authority, but not kingship***. In both accounts, the king, who is alive at the time, gives his signet ring to the other person.

Is there a connection between a signet ring and one's right to kingship? The phrase in Jeremiah 22:24 is conditional, "***even if*** **Coniah … were a signet**". Given that Coniah already was the king at the time the curse was put on him and on his descendants, the context here is that, due to Coniah's wickedness, even if he were vested with God's authority, such as when he first took the throne, it would surely have been removed from him.

What is the meaning of God's saying to Zerubbabel, "**I will make you like a signet; for I have chosen you**"*?* The answer to this question is in the fourth chapter in the Book of Zechariah, where Zerubbabel is told that he has been chosen (anointed) to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. Although Jeconiah was wicked, his great-grandson, Zerubbabel, was righteous and played a central role in the restoration of the second commonwealth; he was given the authority to rule over the Jewish people as *Governor* of Judah (e.g. Haggai 1:1, Ezra 5:14). However, this authority was limited since he did not sit on the throne of David and rule as king of Judah.

Thus, the claim by Christian missionaries that Zerubbabel's appointment reversed the phrase "**for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of**

David, and ruling any more in Judah", does not hold, since the "prospering" is linked to being *King* of Judah, not to being *Governor* of Judah.

<u>Conclusion</u>: God showed his mercy to the righteous Zerubbabel, and rewarded him with the privilege of rebuilding the Temple and ruling as Governor of Judah. This did not revoke or cancel the *Curse on Jeconiah*.

V. SUMMARY

The need to "harmonize" these problematic accounts has motivated Christian missionaries to fashion many and varied scenarios that aim to prove the fallibility of the Jewish messianic vision and the necessity of having it replaced.

In this essay, the main arguments offered by Christian missionaries have been refuted and, in the process, the robustness of the Jewish messianic vision against these relentless attempts to undermine and invalidate it was demonstrated. The analysis also showed how the Christian messianic paradigm is based on two hopelessly irreconcilable genealogies in the New Testament, both of which are also inconsistent with the corresponding genealogy recorded in the Hebrew Bible.

The Christian messianic paradigm is not only riddled with many insurmountable issues, it is contradictory to the Hebrew Bible, a similitude of which, the Christian "Old Testament", is part of the Christian Bible. In other words, the Christian Bible consists of two "testaments" that contradict each other, a problem from which Christian missionaries cannot escape.

Who Is the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53?
Part II - The Christian Interpretation, Valid or Not?[1]

I. Introduction & Review

In the previous essay, henceforth referred to as Part I, the *Scientific Method* was applied in testing the validity of the Jewish perspective on Isaiah's *Fourth Servant Song*.[2] The validation of the Jewish interpretation also identified the entity to which the prophet refers as עַבְדִּי, (***avDI***), **My servant**, and which is commonly referred to as the *suffering servant*.

A description of the *Scientific Method* is included in Part I. Therefore, it will not be repeated in this essay. However, the results obtained from each stage of the *Scientific Method*, as applied to the Jewish interpretation in Part I, are provided here in order to facilitate their comparison with the results obtained from the analysis of the Christian interpretation.

In Part I, the *Observation* stage of the *Scientific Method* yielded a sample of "data", which consisted of the following three data elements:

Data Element #1:	**"My servant" is a reference by God to one of His servants.**
Data Element #2:	**Nine instances located within the part of the Book of Isaiah that includes the four Servant Songs – Isaiah 41:8,9, 43:10, 44:1,2,21(2x), 45:4, 49:3 – positively identify the servant as *Israel*.**
Data Element #3:	***Israel* is the subject of the two chapters which surround the Fourth Servant Song.**

This sample of "data" was used in the *Generalization* stage to formulate the following hypothesis, which will be called, henceforth, the original *Hypothesis*:

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:
- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "h"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

[2] *Who is the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53? Part I – The Jewish Interpretation, Valid or Not?* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Isa53JP.pdf

✡ **Hypothesis**: ***Israel*** **is the servant in the Fourth Servant Song.**

In the *Verification* stage, the validity of the original *Hypothesis* was tested, on a verse-by-verse basis, by subjecting the Hebrew text of the *Fourth Servant Song* to detailed grammatical analysis, demonstration of contextual consistency with the teachings of the Hebrew Bible, and validation against the historical record.

The results of this process confirmed the validity of the original *Hypothesis*, which led to the following definitive conclusion about the identity of the servant:

✡ **Conclusion: The servant in Isaiah's Fourth Servant Song is (the righteous remnant of)** ***Israel***.

The *Scientific Method* is next applied to the Christian interpretation of "Isaiah 53".[3]

II. THE CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON "ISAIAH 53"

As a centerpiece of Christian theology, "Isaiah 53" is also one of the most widely used so-called "proof texts" in the portfolio of Christian missionaries. It is, therefore, necessary to subject the Christian interpretation of the passage to a rigorous analysis rather than simply dismiss it as being false, now that the Jewish perspective has been validated. The analytical process utilizes the *Scientific Method*, subject to some limitations, conditions, and restrictions, which are necessitated by the following special circumstances:

✡ **Since the source text of "Isaiah 53" is the (Masoretic Text of the) Hebrew Bible, the "proof text" for the analysis is the Hebrew Bible. The English translations to be used remain the same as were used in the analysis of the Jewish perspective.**

➢ **Although the New Testament is not accepted as Scripture within Judaism, it is used, as needed, to validate claims by Christians. The KJV translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures is used for this purpose.**

The predominant[4] Christian perspective on "Isaiah 53" can be summarized as follows:

- ✞ **"Isaiah 53" is messianic Scripture, i.e., it speaks of the Messiah and of the messianic era**
- ✞ **"Isaiah 53" is a prophetic passage about the life, suffering, atoning sacrificial death, and eventual resurrection and triumph of Jesus, Christianity's Messiah**
- ✞ **"Isaiah 53" is a description of a humble deliverer and sin-bearer who, after being sacrificed as a guilt offering for the sins of others, sees the result of his atoning work and is satisfied**

Much has been written by Christian commentators and apologists concerning this passage and how remarkably and unmistakably it describes Jesus. The following is

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[3] Since Christians commonly refer to Isaiah's *Fourth Servant Song* as "Isaiah 53", this designation is used throughout the analysis of the Christian interpretation.

[4] Although many, perhaps most, Christian sources adhere to the view described herein, some prominent Christian scholarly sources, such as the *New Revised Standard Version Bible* (NRSV), *The New Jerusalem Bible*, and *The Oxford Study Bible*, identify the (people of) Israel as the *suffering servant* described in "Isaiah 53".

one such example, a quote from the commentary by Matthew Henry (18th century C.E.) on Isaiah 52:13-15 (unless stated otherwise, highlighting added for emphasis throughout this document):

> **This prophecy, which begins here and is continued to the end of the next chapter, points as plainly as can be at Jesus Christ; the ancient Jews understood it of the Messiah, though the modern Jews take a great deal of pains to pervert it, and some of ours (no friends therein to the Christian religion) will have it understood of Jeremiah; but Philip, who hence preached Christ to the eunuch, has put it past dispute that of him speaks the prophet this, of him and of no other man, Acts 8:34, 35.**

When these elaborate commentaries and other written materials are subjected to rigorous scrutiny, they all are found plagued by common flaws and shortcomings, such as the following:

- **These descriptions are not based on the Hebrew text of the passage. Rather, they are based on (Christian) translations, which are often mistranslations, and which are generally replete with the Christological biases of the translators.**
- **Their authors make assumptions that are inconsistent with the teachings of the Hebrew Bible, such as the divinity of Jesus (i.e., being "the only begotten son of God"), his having vicariously died for the sins of others, and that he is the Messiah who died and resurrected, and who will return in a "second coming".**
- **They propagate certain false notions which, through their continuing repetition from Church pulpits and in written form, have become misperceived as if they were factual and "the truth". The highlighted portion in the above quote from the Matthew Henry commentary is a case-in-point, one which has been quoted by Christian missionaries as being factual. Modern versions of this deception contend that it was RASHI [Rabbi Shlomo Ben Yitzhak, the great Jewish Sage of the 11th century C.E.], or the generic "Rabbis", who invented the idea that Israel is the suffering servant in "Isaiah 53" as an attempt to deny that which is so obviously Jesus to Christians. Although ancient Jewish sources (such as the *Zohar* on Exodus and *Midrash Rabbah* on Numbers) can be used to refute this claim, perhaps the most effective way to expose the lie is to refer to the works of early Christian theologians. One such person, Origen, the late-second-early-third century C.E. Greek Church Father, quotes in his *Contra Celsum* the ancient Jewish understanding of "Isaiah 53" as referring to the Jewish people and their suffering:**

  > **1:55. I remember that once in a discussion with some whom the Jews regard as learned I used these prophecies** [*editorial note*: referring to Isaiah 53]**. At this the Jew said that these prophecies referred to the whole people as though of a single individual, since they were scattered in the dispersion and smitten, that as a result of the scattering of the Jews among the other nations many might become proselytes.** *[Henry Chadwick, Cambridge Press, Page 50]*

So, when Matthew Henry writes that "**... the ancient Jews understood it of the Messiah, though the modern Jews take a great deal of pains to pervert it ...**", he is guilty of perpetrating the very same act which he (falsely) charges "modern Jews" had done – an obvious perversion of the facts!

As was done in Part I, the analysis of "Isaiah 53" presented below is divided into four segments – Isaiah 52:13-15, Isaiah 53:1-4, Isaiah 53:5-8, and Isaiah 53:9-12 – each of which is processed separately, with the results cumulatively summarized in tabular form at the end of each respective segment.

III. Segment 1 - Isaiah 52:13-15

An immediate problem is encountered when attempting to apply the *Scientific Method* to the Christian perspective. Namely, that such a systematic process (as was applied to the Jewish perspective) cannot be used with respect to Jesus, since the Hebrew Bible does not mention him, certainly not in any explicit form by naming him anywhere. The difficulty becomes particularly evident when attempting to collect a sample of "data" from which to formulate a hypothesis. As a result, the rigor used in connection with the Jewish perspective must be relaxed in order to facilitate a preliminary identification of the servant.

A. The Observation Stage – Collecting the "Data"

The problem noted above first becomes evident in the *Observation* stage, where a new set of data elements must be obtained, from which an alternative "starting point" is to be selected.

A review of the original set of data elements indicates that the original *Data Element #1* is sufficiently general and universally true, so that it is still valid here:

Data Element #1: "My servant" is a reference by God to one of His servants.

The previously obtained results from a search of the Hebrew Bible for all instances of the term עַבְדִּי that apply specifically to a servant of God are also still valid. These are reproduced in Table III.A-1.

Table III.A-1 – Identified instances of עַבְדִּי, in the Hebrew Bible

Book	#	Name of Servant	Reference
Genesis	1	Abraham	26:24
Numbers	2	Moses; Caleb*	12:7,8; 14:24*
Joshua	1	Moses	1:2,7
2 Samuel	1	David	3:18, 7:5,8
1 Kings	1	David	11:13,32,34,36,38, 14:8
2 Kings	2	Moses; David	21:8; 19:34, 20:6
Isaiah	4/"X"	Isaiah; Eliakim; David; Israel-Jacob-Jeshurun; "not explicitly named"	20.3; 22:20; 37:35; 41:8,9, 43:10**, 44:1,2,21(2x), 45:4, 49:3; "42:1,19, 52:13, 53:11"
Jeremiah	3	Nebuchadnezzar; Israel-Jacob; David	25:9, 27:6, 43:10; 30:10, 46:27,28; 33:21,22,26
Ezekiel	2	Israel/Jacob; David	28:25, 37:25; 34:23,24, 37:24,25
Haggai	1	Zerubbabel	2:23
Zechariah	1	Tsemah	3:8
Malachi	1	Moses	3:22
Psalms	1	David	89:4,21
Job	1	Job	1:8, 2:3, 42:7,8(3x)
1Chronicles	1	David	17:4,7

* To facilitate correlation between **Name of Servant** and **Reference**, alternating highlighting is used when more than one name appears.

** Though not explicitly named, the context unambiguously identifies Israel/Jacob as servant.

An iterative process applied to the data shown in Table III.A-1 provides clues that help identify an alternate candidate for the title ***My servant*** in "Isaiah 53".

First iteration: The name ***Israel*** (also called ***Jacob*** and ***Jeshurun***) is excluded from the analysis since ***Israel*** was the candidate for this title in the analysis of the Jewish interpretation.

The results obtained from this iteration are shown Table III.A-2, which includes a column that indicates whether there is a possible "fit" with "Isaiah 53".

Table III.A-2 – Search for alternate candidate for the title *My servant*

Book	Name of Servant	Reference	"Fit" with "Isaiah 53"?
Genesis	Abraham	26:24	No
Numbers	Moses; Caleb*	12:7,8; 14:24*	No
Joshua	Moses	1:2,7	No
2 Samuel	David	3:18, 7:5,8	No
1 Kings	David	11:13,32,34,36,38, 14:8	No
2 Kings	Moses; David	21:8; 19:34, 20:6	No
Isaiah	Isaiah	20.3	No
	Eliakim	22:20	No
	David	37:35	No
Jeremiah	Nebuchadnezzar	25:9, 27:6, 43:10	No
	David	33:21,22,26	No
Ezekiel	**David**	**34:23,24, 37:24,25**	**Yes**
Haggai	Zerubbabel	2:23	No
Zechariah	**TSEmah**	**3:8**	**Yes (?)**
Malachi	Moses	3:22	No
Psalms	David	89:4,21	**Yes (?)**
Job	Job	1:8, 2:3, 42:7,8(3x)	No
1Chronicles	David	17:4,7	No

* To facilitate correlation between **Name of Servant** and **Reference**, alternating highlighting is used when more than one name appears.

Second iteration: The context of the respective passages from the Books of Genesis, Numbers, Joshua 2Samuel, 1Kings, 2Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Haggai, Malachi, Job, and 1Chronicles, indicates that none of the named individuals who were called ***My servant*** by God – Abraham, Moses, Caleb, David, Isaiah, Eliakim, Nebuchadnezzar, and Zerubbabel – "fit" into the context of "Isaiah 53".

The references to David as ***My servant*** (God's servant) in the Book of Ezekiel are unique among the entries in Table III.A-2 since they are allusions to ***the Messiah*** and, on this, both Christian and Jewish writers generally agree.

This produces another data element:

Data Element #2: The prophet Ezekiel refers to *the Messiah* as "My Servant".

The Jewish writers are divided about the name ***TSEmah*** (צֶמַח), which literally means **[a] Sprout**, and which appears twice in the Book of Zechariah (Zechariah 3:8, 6:12), and is specifically referred to as ***My servant***, at Zechariah 3:8. Some hold that the context of Zechariah 3:8 (& 6:12) is historical, not messianic, and that the reference is to Zerubbabel, as confirmed by Haggai 2:23. Others opine that צֶמַח is a reference to מָשִׁיחַ (***mashi'ah***), ***the*** Jewish ***Messiah***. According to Christian writers, "The Branch", which is the common translation of the name צֶמַח in Christian bibles, points to ***Jesus***, Christianity's Messiah. Similarly, Christian writers and some Jewish writers consider Psalms 89:4[3 in Christian bibles] as messianic. Although the opinions diverge, the "messianic" view is used here as the third data element:

Data Element #3: Christian writers agree with some Jewish writers that the respective passages in the Book of Zechariah and in the Book of Psalms refer to *the Messiah*.

A fourth data element is obtained from the fact that much of the material contained in Chapters 40-66 in the Book of Isaiah deals with the messianic era:

Data Element #4: A significant portion of Chapters 40-66 in the Book of Isaiah concerns the messianic era.

Together, these four data elements comprise the required sample of "data" to proceed with the analysis of the Christian perspective on "Isaiah 53".

B. Generalization Stage – Formulating A New Hypothesis

Data Elements 1, 2, 3, &4 form the sample "data" from which a *New Hypothesis* on the identity of the servant in "Isaiah 53" is formulated. Each of these data elements contains a "clue". By combining these "clues", the *New Hypothesis* is obtained, one that represents the substance of the Christian view of "Isaiah 53":

✞ **New Hypothesis: *The Messiah* is the servant in "Isaiah 53".**

The statement of this *New Hypothesis* is somewhat of a "stretch", since the rigor that is required for a valid application of the *Scientific Method* had to be mitigated in order to enable the process to get started. Yet, the fact that some Jewish commentators identify ***the Messiah*** as the servant in Isaiah's *First Servant Song*, Isaiah 42:1-4, can be used to lend some, albeit weak, support the *New Hypothesis*.[5] Given the limitations at hand, this is the best that can be done to affect a parallel analysis of the Christian perspective on "Isaiah 53".

One final issue remains to be addressed and resolved before the *Verification* stage can be initiated: *How will* ***Jesus*** *be included in this process?* According to Christian theology, this is not a problem since, to Christians, ***Jesus*** is ***the***

[5] It should be noted that not all Jewish commentators agree on this, and as many as three other candidates for ***My servant*** in Isaiah 42:1 have been proposed; namely, Cyrus, Isaiah, and Israel

Messiah. The problem with respect to Judaism is that, while the concept of "***the Messiah***" is central to it, any attempt to identify this title with ***Jesus*** would be outside the boundaries of Judaism and is, therefore, unacceptable. After all, since Judaism predates Christianity, Judaism precludes ***Jesus***. Consequently, in order to manage this problem, the *Verification* stage is designed in terms of two separate, but parallel, comparisons. In one comparison, the Hebrew text of "Isaiah 53" is contrasted against what the Hebrew Bible teaches about ***the*** [promised Jewish] ***Messiah*** on a verse-by-verse basis. In the other comparison, the Hebrew text of "Isaiah 53" is contrasted against what the New Testament teaches about ***Jesus*** (Christianity's Messiah), on a verse-by-verse basis.

C. Verification Stage – Testing the New Hypothesis

The *New Hypothesis* is now tested using the two separate comparisons described above.

Isaiah 52:13

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
52:13	Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.	Behold, My servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and he shall be very high.	הִנֵּה יַשְׂכִּיל עַבְדִּי יָרוּם וְנִשָּׂא וְגָבַהּ מְאֹד׃	נב,יג

The servant is called ***My servant***, i.e., God's servant, in this verse. The verse describes a servant who will prosper (or, alternatively, acquire knowledge), one who will be in a prestigious leadership position, lauded and revered by many.

✡ **[Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 52:13 apply to *the Messiah*?**

According to the Hebrew Bible, ***the Messiah*** will surely be one of God's servants. Do the other attributes mentioned here also apply to ***the Messiah***? The Hebrew text of this verse includes the term, יַשְׂכִּיל (***yaskil***), which derives from the root verb שׂכל (***sin-chaf-lamed***), **[to] prosper, [to] acquire knowledge/wisdom**. A similar term, וְהִשְׂכִּיל (***v***^{e}***hiskil***), **and [he shall] prosper**, is used by the prophet Jeremiah in reference to ***the Messiah*** (Jeremiah 23:5). Although the remaining descriptions are not explicitly used in the Hebrew Bible with respect to ***the Messiah***, terms such as **lifted up** and **high** refer to someone rising from among "the masses" to an important position of leadership. Similar terminology that alludes to a high and respected position of leadership is associated with ***the Messiah*** in other messianic passages within the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Daniel 7:14).

✡ **[Hebrew Bible] Answer: Yes!**

✞ [New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 52:13 apply to *Jesus*?

The New Testament contains explicit references to several Biblical personalities who were God's servants – David (Luke 1:69), Moses (Revelation 15:3), and "the prophets" (Revelation 10:7). However, nowhere do the authors of the New Testament refer to ***Jesus*** as God's servant, nor does anyone ever explicitly call him ***My servant***. The expression ***My servant*** appears only once in the New Testament (with several variations on the capitalization, depending on version and, at times, the phrase is also modified with an added adjective), at Matthew 12:18, where it is an allusion to ***Jesus***, although it occurs there in a reference to Isaiah's *First Servant Song* (Isaiah 42:1-4).

According to Christian theology, ***Jesus*** is God manifest in the flesh, and is the Son "personage" in the triune godhead for most Christians, all of which components are claimed to be of "equal" status. *But, how can **Jesus** be God's servant if they are "equals"?* After all, a servant is lower in status, or "subservient", to his master. Complex, convoluted, and unconvincing answers to this question, which are often based on circular reasoning, are offered by missionaries. Contrary to those explanations, the authors of the New Testament state the "bottom line" on several occasions, such as:

> **John 15:15(KJV) – Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.** [See also Luke 7:8, 12:47.]

Therefore, from a Trinitarian Christian perspective, it would not be appropriate to associate the title ***My servant*** with ***Jesus*** as being God's servant. *Are not the three components of the triune godhead co-equals in every way?*

A further search of the New Testament for indications that ***Jesus*** prospered, or acquired wisdom, yields the following passage:

> **Luke 2:52(KJV) – And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.**

Once again, one must question whether this can be an attribute of God. After all, the Hebrew Bible teaches that God does not change (Malachi 3:6), yet here the New Testament clearly states that ***Jesus*** was "growing up", i.e., changing. Secondly, since God is omniscient, i.e., all-knowing, how was it possible for ***Jesus*** to learn more if he were this omniscient God?

The authors of the New Testament refer to ***Jesus*** being exalted (Acts 5:31; Philippians 2:9). However, there is nothing found within the New Testament to support the rest of the verse Isaiah 52:13. Concerning the matter of the servant being **lifted up** and made **high**, how could this possibly refer to a divine being? Recall that the prophet Malachi declares how God does not change! The only (implicit) reference in the New Testament to any kind of "lifting up" of ***Jesus*** is during the event of his crucifixion, when he had to be

literally raised unto the cross, which placed him in a higher position than the people who may have stood around on the ground.

✞ **<u>[New Testament] Answer</u>: No!**

<u>Isaiah 52:14</u>

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
52:14	As many were astonied at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:	As many wondered about you, "How marred his appearance is from that of a man, and his features from that of people!"	כַּאֲשֶׁר שָׁמְמוּ עָלֶיךָ כֵּן־מִשְׁחַת מֵאִישׁ מַרְאֵהוּ וְתֹאֲרוֹ מִבְּנֵי אָדָם׃	נב,יד

The multitudes were astonished when they saw the servant, whose features were so disfigured that he did not even bear resemblance to a human being, be exalted and become successful.

✡ **<u>[Hebrew Bible] Question</u>: Can Isaiah 52:14 apply to *the Messiah*?**

There are no passages in the Hebrew Bible where ***the Messiah*** is described in this kind of language, i.e., as having first been beaten beyond recognition, and later being exalted and becoming successful.

✡ **<u>[Hebrew Bible] Answer</u>: No!**

✞ **<u>[New Testament] Question</u>: Can Isaiah 52:14 apply to *Jesus*?**

The accounts of the events leading up to the crucifixion include several descriptions of how ***Jesus*** was handled by the Roman soldiers. Apparently the Romans (verbally) mocked him, they placed a crown of thorns on his head, spat on him, and hit him on the head, either with a reed or with their hands (e.g., Matthew 27:27-30, John 19:2-3).

From the treatment described in the New Testament, and given that this took place over a short period of time prior to his crucifixion, could the appearance of ***Jesus*** have been marred and his features disfigured to such an extent that he was unrecognizable as a person?

What did ***Jesus*** look like throughout his entire life span prior to this treatment? Was he also in this condition? If he were in this condition, why would God have chosen such a damaged body for Himself? Quite to the contrary, the authors of the New Testament describe ***Jesus*** as handsome and popular with the multitudes (e.g., Matthew 21:9; Luke 2:52), an image that is depicted in many later works of art.

✞ **<u>[New Testament] Answer</u>: No!**

Isaiah 52:15

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
52:15	So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.	So shall he cause many nations to be startled; kings shall shut their mouths because of him, because that which had not been told to them they saw, and that which they had not heard they perceived.	כֵּן יַזֶּה גּוֹיִם רַבִּים עָלָיו יִקְפְּצוּ מְלָכִים פִּיהֶם כִּי אֲשֶׁר לֹא-סֻפַּר לָהֶם רָאוּ וַאֲשֶׁר לֹא-שָׁמְעוּ הִתְבּוֹנָנוּ׃	נב,טו

(i) Romans 15:21(KJV) - But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

This verse describes the future surprise expressed by many (Gentile) nations; their leaders will be dumbfounded by what they perceive, which will not be what they expected.

✡ [Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 52:15 apply to *the Messiah*?

There are no passages in the Hebrew Bible in which this kind of a reaction to the appearance of ***the Messiah*** is described. Yet, it is reasonable to posit that, when he executes and completes the messianic agenda, the (Gentile) nations will be astonished.

✡ [Hebrew Bible] Answer: Yes!

✞ [New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 52:15 apply to *Jesus*?

The cross-referenced passage, Romans 15:21, points to the last two phrases in this verse. However, the context of Isaiah 52:15 is different from the context of the passage in the New Testament:

> **Romans 15:20-22(KJV) – (20) Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: (21) But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand. (22) For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.**

Paul is addressing an audience of Romans as he explains his own mission to them. Christian missionaries are still busy doing this today, as they have been doing for the past two millennia. Any astonishment here, and none is described by Paul, did not result from the unexpected success of the servant who, after all, was viewed as a lowly being. Some other religions of the world today have very large numbers of followers, and many of these people may have never even heard about ***Jesus***, yet they do not appear to be astonished at what they may be hearing from the Christian missionaries.

Moreover, Christian theology holds that ***Jesus*** will return, as he promises in the New Testament (Matthew 24, John 14), at which time he will reign as ***the*** King/***Messiah***. Yet, there are no Scriptures found in the Hebrew Bible that

speak of ***the Messiah*** coming, failing to complete the messianic agenda, dying on a cross, and returning in glory to complete that which he did not accomplish during his first appearance. According to the Hebrew Bible, ***the Messiah*** is expected to execute and successfully complete the messianic agenda during his reign following his first and only appearance.

✞ **[New Testament] Answer: No!**

D. Interim Summary – Isaiah 52:13-15

The *Scientific Method* is applied to the Christian perspective on "Isaiah 53". In effect, the work previously done with the Jewish perspective, where the original *Hypothesis* was tested against the Hebrew text and the historical record, and validated, was set aside, and the process was started afresh in order to develop a *New Hypothesis* that would represent the Christian perspective.

Although certain restrictions had to be imposed on the texts being utilized, and some of the rigor applied in formulating the original *Hypothesis* had to be relaxed, a new set of data elements was generated from which the following *New Hypothesis* was formulated:

✞ **New Hypothesis: *The Messiah* is the servant in "Isaiah 53".**

This *New Hypothesis* is being tested against the Hebrew text of the Hebrew Bible. Along with the *New Hypothesis*, also being tested is the proposition that ***Jesus***, as he is described in the New Testament, is the servant in "Isaiah 53".

Table III.D-1 contains results obtained thus far in the *Verification* stage and, for comparison, results obtained from testing the original *Hypothesis*, are shown in the column on the extreme right.

Table III.D-1 – Results from Verification stage of New Hypothesis for Isaiah 52:13-52:15

		New Hypothesis		Original Hypothesis
		Generic (from HB)	Specific (from NT)	
Isaiah	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Does "*the Messiah*=Servant" Fit?	Does "*Jesus* = Servant" Fit?	Results from testing "*Israel* = Servant"
52:13	Behold, My servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and he shall be very high.	YES	NO	YES
52:14	As many wondered about you, "How marred his appearance is from that of a man, and his features from that of people!"	NO	NO	YES

52:15	**So shall he cause many nations to be startled; kings shall shut their mouths because of him, because that which had not been told to them they saw, and that which they had not heard they perceived.**	**YES**	**NO**	**YES**

IV. Segment 2 – Isaiah 53:1-4

The application of the *Scientific Method* to the Christian perspective on "Isaiah 53" continues with the analysis of the second segment.

A. Verification Stage – Testing the New Hypothesis

The *Verification* stage resumes with a verse-by-verse analysis of the *New Hypothesis*, along the two parallel paths described in Section III.B. One path contrasts what the Hebrew Bible teaches about ***the Messiah*** against the Hebrew text of "Isaiah 53". The parallel path contrasts the way that the New Testament portrays ***Jesus*** (Christianity's Messiah) against the Hebrew text of "Isaiah 53".

Isaiah 53:1

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:1	Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?	Who would have believed our report, and to whom was the arm of the Lord revealed?	מִי הֶאֱמִין לִשְׁמֻעָתֵנוּ וּזְרוֹעַ יהוה עַל-מִי נִגְלָתָה׃	נג,א

(i) John 12:38(KJV) - That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?
Romans 10:16(KJV) - But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

This verse declares how the nations and their kings, who were mentioned in the previous verse, will not see God's mighty arm of salvation until the messianic era commences, as Isaiah himself declares several verses earlier:

Isaiah 52:10 – The Lord has revealed His holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

✡ **[Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 53:1 apply to *the Messiah*?**

Christian missionaries claim that "the arm of the Lord" is a metaphor for ***the Messiah***, yet a search of the Hebrew Bible for this and related imagery reveals no such connection. As was described in Part I, allusions in the Hebrew Bible to God's “arm”, "hand", and “finger”, etc., often are metaphoric references to God’s taking direct action and to His acts of vindication, and these are commonly used to point to the physical and spiritual redemption of the Jewish people. Such terms are never used in the Hebrew Bible as

metaphors for ***the Messiah***, neither is reference made anywhere else in the Hebrew Bible to the salvation of a suffering ***Messiah***.

✡ **[Hebrew Bible] Answer: No!**

✞ **[New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 53:1 apply to *Jesus*?**

This verse is cross-referenced with two verses in the New Testament, John 12:38 and Romans 10:16, both of which allege that the Jews who, even after having seen ***Jesus*** perform miracles, refused to accept him. How could the context change so drastically and have the “voice” suddenly switch to the Jews when the previous verse speaks of the startled kings of many nations? Rather than it being the Jews who speak here, starting at this verse, those kings of the nations begin to realize that what they had perceived in the past is not what they are witnessing. Thus, the authors of these cross-referenced passages in the New Testament either misrepresented or misunderstood Isaiah's words and attributed them to the wrong "speakers".

✞ **[New Testament] Answer: No!**

Isaiah 53:2

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:2	For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.	And he came up like a sapling before it, and like a root out from dry ground; he had no features and no splendor; and we saw him and he had no appearance; and how could we desire him?	וַיַּעַל כַּיּוֹנֵק לְפָנָיו וְכַשֹּׁרֶשׁ מֵאֶרֶץ צִיָּה לֹא-תֹאַר לוֹ וְלֹא הָדָר וְנִרְאֵהוּ וְלֹא-מַרְאֶה וְנֶחְמְדֵהוּ:	נג,ב

The metaphors employed in this verse describe an entity that appeared on the scene but was not expected to survive or, if it survived, it was not going to grow into something beautiful that is desired by everyone.

✡ **[Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 53:2 apply to *the Messiah*?**

The imagery of a young tree growing in dry earth is used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible in connection with the Jewish people, never to describe ***the Messiah***. In fact, other than ***the Messiah*** being a direct male descendant of King David, there is little else found in the Hebrew Bible that describes his other attributes.

✡ **[Hebrew Bible] Answer: No!**

✞ **[New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 53:2 apply to *Jesus*?**

It was noted in connection with Isaiah 52:13 how the New Testament depicts ***Jesus***, with his handsome appearance, charismatic personality, and wisdom,

as constantly gaining popularity among ever growing multitudes. If that was true, how could the present verse possibly refer to the massive rejection of ***Jesus***' message by the Jews at the time of his death? Quite to the contrary, the New Testament indicates that, even within Jerusalem itself, great multitudes were still loyal to ***Jesus*** as he was on his way to being crucified:

> **Luke 23:27(KJV) – And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.**

As it regards his followers outside of Jerusalem, it is most likely that they were unaware of the events that transpired in the capital and, thus, they would not have rejected him at that time.

With approximately 2/3rd of the world's Jewry in the first century C.E. living outside the Land of Israel, it is also likely that the majority of his Jewish contemporaries in the Diaspora never even heard of ***Jesus***. Even the well-known Jewish historian Philo of Alexandria [20 B.C.E.-50 C.E.], a contemporary of ***Jesus***, never mentioned him in his works. Clearly, the rejection of ***Jesus*** by the Jews was not yet an issue at the time of his death.

✝ **[New Testament] Answer: No!**

Isaiah 53:3

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:3	He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.	He was despised and forsaken by men; a man of pains, and accustomed to illness, and as one from whom we would hide our faces; he was despised, and we had no regard for him.	נִבְזֶה וַחֲדַל אִישִׁים אִישׁ מַכְאֹבוֹת וִידוּעַ חֹלִי וּכְמַסְתֵּר פָּנִים מִמֶּנּוּ נִבְזֶה וְלֹא חֲשַׁבְנֻהוּ׃	נג,ג

(ii) Luke 18:31-33(KJV) – (31) Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. (32) For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: (33) And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. [See also Mark 10:33-34; John 1:10-11]

This verse describes a pathetic entity, forsaken and afflicted with sickness, being despised by the multitudes that could not even bear to look at it.

✡ **[Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 53:3 apply to *the Messiah*?**

Descriptions of ***the Messiah*** as being forsaken, sickly, and despised by all are not found anywhere in the Hebrew Bible.

✡ **[Hebrew Bible] Answer: No!**

✞ [New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 53:3 apply to *Jesus*?

Terminology similar to the language found in Isaiah 53:3 is used by the authors of the Gospels in reference to ***Jesus*** for the very short duration of the events that led up to his crucifixion. Otherwise, and quite to the contrary, the Gospels abound with language that gives a very different picture of ***Jesus***.

The phrase "**… despised and forsaken by men …**" cannot be reconciled with the way ***Jesus*** is described in the New Testament, according to which he was immensely popular:

- ✞ **In his youth, he was loved by all (Luke 2:40,47,52)**
- ✞ **He was a popular preacher (Mark 3:7-9)**
- ✞ **He was "praised by all" (Luke 4:14-15)**
- ✞ **He was followed by multitudes who later acclaim him as a prophet upon his triumphant entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 4:25, 21:9-11)**
- ✞ **When it was time to take him away to be crucified, Jesus had to be spirited away since the rulers feared "a riot of the people" (Mark 14:1-2)**

The cross-referenced verse, Luke 18:31, is out of context with respect to the language in the Hebrew Bible, where the expression אִישׁ מַכְאֹבוֹת (***ISH mach'OVOT***), **a man of pains**, appears in connection with the servant. When a person is described in the Hebrew Bible as "**a man of …**", the common implication is that such a condition has been present for a prolonged period of time. For example, the phrase אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים (***ISH E-lOHIM***), **a man of God**, in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., 1Samuel 9:6) signifies that the person was devoted to God for a long time, perhaps even for a lifetime. Other examples of this kind include references to tribal affiliations, such as אִישׁ בִּנְיָמִין (***ISH BinyAMIN***), **a man of [the Tribe of] Benjamin** (e.g., Judges 20:41). Therefore, when the phrase "**… a man of pains, and accustomed to illness …**" is said to apply to ***Jesus***, one must ask: *Where in the New Testament is **Jesus** described as having been afflicted with disease, and for how long did this condition last?* If he were in this condition, one would have to wonder why God would choose to put Himself into such an afflicted and decrepit body, and how ***Jesus*** could qualify as an "unblemished sacrifice" being in such an "imperfect" body.

✞ [New Testament] Answer: No!

Isaiah 53:4

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:4	Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.	Indeed, he bore our illnesses and our pains – he has carried them, yet we had regarded him plagued, smitten by God, and oppressed.	אָכֵן חֳלָיֵנוּ הוּא נָשָׂא וּמַכְאֹבֵינוּ סְבָלָם וַאֲנַחְנוּ חֲשַׁבְנֻהוּ נָגוּעַ מֻכֵּה אלהים וּמְעֻנֶּה׃	נג,ד

(iii) Matthew 8:17(KJV) - That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.

Using terminology similar to that found in the previous verse, this verse provides further elaboration on the perceived condition of the servant. It is still a pathetic entity, and not only is this entity afflicted with illnesses and pains, it was figured to have been plagued, oppressed, and smitten at the hand of God.

✡ **[Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 53:4 apply to *the Messiah*?**

The Messiah is never described in the Hebrew Bible in these terms, and certainly not as someone smitten by God. As the one who will oversee the completion of the messianic agenda, he will be blessed by God, and will be a great and powerful leader.

✡ **[Hebrew Bible] Answer: No!**

✞ **[New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 53:4 apply to *Jesus*?**

The use of the cross-referenced verse, Matthew 8:17, is likely to have been motivated by the author's desire to promote the idea of vicarious punishment, an unfortunate misinterpretation of Isaiah 53:4.

Where in the New Testament is ***Jesus*** ever described in terms of such language, especially as being smitten by God? Nowhere is ***Jesus*** described as being sickly, oppressed, and smitten by God. While on the cross, ***Jesus*** allegedly complained to God about being forsaken (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34), yet King David said that a righteous person is not forsaken by God:

> **Psalms 37:25 – I was young, I also aged, and I have not seen a righteous man forsaken and his seed seeking bread.**

Was ***Jesus*** righteous? If, as missionaries claim, he was God, how could he forsake himself, or be unable to help himself while on the cross?

✞ **[New Testament] Answer: No!**

B. Interim Summary – Isaiah 53:1-4

The *New Hypothesis*, formulated in Section III.B, is being tested against the Hebrew text via the *Verification* stage of the *Scientific Method*. Along with the *New Hypothesis*, also being tested is the proposition that ***Jesus***, as he is described in the New Testament, is the servant in "Isaiah 53".

Table IV.B-1 contains results obtained thus far in the *Verification* stage and, for comparison, results obtained from testing the original Hypothesis, are shown in the column on the extreme right.

Table IV.B-1 – Results from Verification stage of New Hypothesis for Isaiah 52:13-53:6

		New Hypothesis		Original Hypothesis
		Generic (from HB)	Generic (from HB)	
Isaiah	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Does "*the Messiah*=Servant" Fit?	Does "*Jesus* = Servant" Fit?	Results from testing "*Israel* = Servant"
52:13	Behold, My servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and he shall be very high.	YES	NO	YES
52:14	As many wondered about you, "How marred his appearance is from that of a man, and his features from that of people!"	NO	NO	YES
52:15	So shall he cause many nations to be startled; kings shall shut their mouths because of him, because that which had not been told to them they saw, and that which they had not heard they perceived.	YES	NO	YES
53:1	Who would have believed our report, and to whom was the arm of the Lord revealed?	NO	NO	YES
53:2	And he came up like a sapling before it, and like a root out from dry ground; he had no features and no splendor; and we saw him that he had no appearance; and how could we desire him?	NO	NO	YES
53:3	He was despised and forsaken by men; a man of pains, and accustomed to illness, and as one from whom we would hide our faces; he was despised, and we had no regard for him.	NO	NO	YES
53:4	Indeed, he bore our illnesses, and our pains – he has carried them, yet we had regarded him plagued, smitten by God, and oppressed.	NO	NO	YES

V. Segment 3 – Isaiah 53:5-8

The application of the *Scientific Method* to the Christian perspective on "Isaiah 53" continues with the analysis of the last segment.

A. Verification Stage – Testing the New Hypothesis

The *Verification* stage resumes with a verse-by-verse analysis of the *New Hypothesis*, along the two parallel paths described in Section III.B. One path contrasts what the Hebrew Bible teaches about ***the Messiah*** against the Hebrew text of "Isaiah 53". The parallel path contrasts the way that the New Testament portrays ***Jesus*** (Christianity's Messiah) against the Hebrew text of "Isaiah 53".

Isaiah 53:5

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:5	But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.(i)	But he was pained because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities; the chastisement of our welfare was upon him, and with his wounds we were healed.	וְהוּא מְחֹלָל מִפְּשָׁעֵנוּ מְדֻכָּא מֵעֲוֹ נֹתֵינוּ מוּסַר שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ עָלָיו וּבַחֲבֻרָתוֹ נִרְפָּא-לָנוּ׃	נג,ה

(i) Romans 4:25(KJV) – Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

1Corinthians 15:3(KJV) – For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

Hebrews 5:8(KJV) – Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

Hebrews 9:28(KJV) – So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

1Peter 2:24-25(KJV) – (24) Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. (25) For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

The servant is described here as having suffered because of the evil acts of others. Their sicknesses became the vehicle for the servant's oppression, thereby inflicting suffering on the servant, which he bore.

✡ **[Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 53:5 apply to *the Messiah*?**

The Messiah is never described in the Hebrew Bible as being wounded, and oppressed by others. Quite to the contrary, if ***the Messiah*** is the servant in Isaiah's *First Servant Song*, then the following is said of him there:

> **Isaiah 42:4 – He [*the Messiah*] shall not fail nor shall he be crushed till he has set judgment in the earth; and the islands shall wait for his Torah.**

With the above being one of the descriptions of ***the Messiah***, it is rather clear that Isaiah 53:5 does not describe the same individual.

✡ **[Hebrew Bible] Answer: No!**

✟ **[New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 53:5 apply to *Jesus*?**

As can be seen from the number of cross-referenced verses to it, the authors of the New Testament quite fond of this verse in their efforts to design and. promote the notion that the death of ***Jesus*** effected the atonement of the sins of others. Yet, aside of the mistranslations in the KJV, human vicarious atonement is strictly prohibited according to the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Exodus 32:31-33; Numbers 35:33; Deuteronomy 24:16; 2Kings 14:6; Jeremiah 31:29[30]; Ezekiel 18:4,20; Psalms 49:7-8).

✟ **[New Testament] Answer: No!**

Isaiah 53:6

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:6	All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.	We all went astray like sheep, we have turned, each one on his way, and the Lord inflicted upon him [*or*, accepted his prayers for] the iniquity of all of us.	כֻּלָּנוּ כַּצֹּאן תָּעִינוּ אִישׁ לְדַרְכּוֹ פָּנִינוּ וַיהוה הִפְגִּיעַ בּוֹ אֵת עֲוֺן כֻּלָּנוּ׃	נג,ו

This verse is a statement about the speakers having lost their way and, depending on which of the two possible Jewish renditions of the last phrase is accepted, either that the servant was punished through the speakers at God's behest, or that the servant's intercession on behalf of his oppressors was accepted by God.

✡ **[Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 53:6 apply to *the Messiah*?**

According the first case, the servant is punished by God through the speakers. There is no situation described anywhere in the Hebrew Bible where ***the Messiah*** was to be punished and oppressed by others at God's request.

In the alternate case, there are no evidence in the Hebrew Bible to support the notion that ***the Messiah*** will intercede on behalf of his oppressors; after all, no such oppressors are ever mentioned.

✡ **[Hebrew Bible] Answer: No!**

✟ **[New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 53:6 apply to *Jesus*?**

The New Testament contains many references to ***Jesus*** taking on the people's sins and dying for them (e.g., Matthew 26:28; 1Corinthians 15:3; 1Peter 2:24; 1John 3:5), though none testify to the text of Isaiah 53:6, according to which this was inflicted on him by the people at God's request. In fact, some passages in the New Testament claim that ***Jesus*** may have done this at his own behest:

Galatians 1:3-4(KJV) – (3) Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, (4) Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:

The closest the New Testament approaches the concept that God may have had a hand in the event is in passages such as the following:

John 3:16(KJV) – For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

1John 4:10(KJV) – Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

However, none of these passages reflect the context of Isaiah 53:6 and, perhaps, that is the reason they are not cross-referenced to this verse.

Even though the alternative rendition is neither found nor acknowledged in Christian translations, does the New Testament describe any situations where ***Jesus*** interceded on behalf of someone who oppressed him? While no such accounts are recorded about the Pharisees, who were alleged to be his enemies, one such passage concerns the Roman soldiers who put ***Jesus*** on the cross:

Luke 23:34(KJV) – Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

Based on this passage, ***Jesus*** is given the benefit of the doubt with respect to Isaiah 53:6.

✞ **[New Testament] Answer: Yes!**

ISAIAH 53:7

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:7	He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.	He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he would not open his mouth; like a lamb to the slaughter he would be brought, and like a ewe that is mute before her shearers, and he would not open his mouth.	נִגַּשׂ וְהוּא נַעֲנֶה וְלֹא יִפְתַּח-פִּיו כַּשֶּׂה יוּבָל וּכְרָחֵל לִפְנֵי גֹזְזֶיהָ נֶאֱלָמָה וְלֹא יִפְתַּח פִּיו:	נג,ז

(ii) Matthew 26:63(KJV) – But Jesus held his peace, And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.
Matthew 27:12-14(KJV) – (12) And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. (13) Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? (14) And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.
Mark 14:61(KJV) – But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?
Mark 15:5(KJV) – But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled.
Luke 23:9(KJV) – Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.
John 19:9(KJV) – And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.
Acts 8:32(KJV) – The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

This verse describes an oppressed and afflicted servant who, like a lamb being led to the slaughter or like a sheep being sheared, never opened his mouth.

✡ [Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 53:7 apply to *the Messiah*?

There are no passages in the Hebrew Bible where ***the Messiah*** is compared to a lamb on its way to be slaughtered, or to a sheep standing silently before its shearers.

✡ [Hebrew Bible] Answer: No!

✞ [New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 53:7 apply to *Jesus*?

There are several cross-referenced citations of this verse in the New Testament, as indicated below the translation. All cited verses, except for Acts 8:32, describe how ***Jesus*** stood silently when questioned by Pilate and the High Priest. Acts 8:32 is a "quote" of Isaiah 53:7, which, according to the context in Acts 8, was the passage the Ethiopian eunuch read and asked Philip to teach him of whom Isaiah was speaking. Philip responded that it was speaking of ***Jesus***. So, the overall impression of these references to this verse is that ***Jesus*** was quiet on his way to be crucified.

The Gospel accounts contain (conflicting) accounts that describe ***Jesus*** as anything but silent in his own defense before the High Priest:

> **John 18:19-23(KJV) – (19) The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. (20) Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. (21) Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. (22) And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? (23) Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?**

Jesus also protested when questioned by Pontius Pilate:

> **John 18:33-37(KJV) – (33) Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? (34) Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? (35) Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? (36) Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. (37) Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.**

Jesus also prayed at the cross, as was noted in the discussion of Isaiah 53:6.

Then, according to the Gospel accounts, ***Jesus*** did not remain silent when he was on the cross, with his last words being reported differently in three of the four Gospels:

> **Matthew 27:46(KJV) – And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?** [See also Mark 15:34; Luke 23:46; John 19:30.]

In fact, according to the Gospel of Matthew, ***Jesus*** screamed so loudly while on the cross that it might have even caused an earthquake:

> **Matthew 27:50-51(KJV) – (50) Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. (51) And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;**

Moreover, it seems that ***Jesus*** tried to save himself from death with prayers:

> **Matthew 26.39(KJV) – And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.** [See also Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42]

> **Hebrews 5:7(KJV) – Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;**

Jesus did not go willingly to his death, and he protested loudly against it, contrary to Galatians 1:4, cited earlier in reference to Isaiah 53:6.

These accounts in the New Testament contradict the claim that ***Jesus*** was silent before his accusers, and that he humbled himself and did not open his mouth. The encounters with the Jewish and Roman authorities involved strong verbal confrontations and did not feature a silent and meek ***Jesus***. Quite to the contrary, he is depicted as presenting a strong defense of himself and for his teaching.

✞ **[New Testament] Answer: No!**

ISAIAH 53:8

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:8	He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.	From imprisonment and from judgment he was taken, and his generation who shall tell? For he was cut off from the land of the living; because of the transgression of my people, a plague came upon them.	מֵעֹצֶר וּמִמִּשְׁפָּט לֻקָּח וְאֶת־דּוֹרוֹ מִי יְשׂוֹחֵחַ כִּי נִגְזַר מֵאֶרֶץ חַיִּים מִפֶּשַׁע עַמִּי נֶגַע לָמוֹ׃	נג,ח

This verse continues to describe the servant who was deprived of fair treatment, and who was banished from his land and was afflicted because of the transgressions of the speaker's people.

✡ [Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 53:8 apply to *the Messiah*?

Aside from the fact that the servant is described here in the plural in terms of the collective noun, לָמוֹ (***lamo***), **[to/unto/upon] them**, which rules out an individual, such descriptions of ***the Messiah*** are not found in the Hebrew Bible.

✡ [Hebrew Bible] Answer: No!

✞ [New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 53:8 apply to *Jesus*?

The New Testament does not describe ***Jesus*** as being taken out of imprisonment and from judgment, and cut off from the land of the living, i.e., exiled from the Land of Israel.

Even with the numerous references in the New Testament to the idea that ***Jesus*** died for the sins of mankind, according to the description of the servant in this verse, and as further supported in the Hebrew Bible, this could not possibly be the case. First, it was already demonstrated that the servant described here in terms of a compound noun is a plurality, a group of people, not an individual. Second, the claim in the New Testament is that ***Jesus***, who, according to Christian beliefs, is God incarnate in the flesh as a human being, was offered as a sacrifice in order to pay the ransom for people's sins and thereby providing their salvation through the shedding of the human blood of his human flesh. In other words, it was ***Jesus*** the human being and not ***Jesus*** the divine being that allegedly served as the sacrificial offering for the atonement of humanity's sins. Yet, according to the Hebrew Bible, this scenario is not possible:

> **Psalms 49:8 – A brother cannot redeem a man, he cannot give his ransom to God.**

Compare this with the KJV "Old Testament" rendition:

> **Psalms 49:7(KJV) – None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him:**

Both versions clearly convey the same message, that one human being cannot redeem another. On the other hand, according to the New Testament, the human, not the divine, aspect of ***Jesus*** was offered as a ransom for the salvation of mankind. *Which source should be accepted as the authoritative one – the Hebrew Bible or the New Testament?*

✞ **[New Testament] Answer: No!**

B. Interim Summary – Isaiah 53:5-8

The *New Hypothesis*, formulated in Section III.B, is being tested against the Hebrew text via the *Verification* stage of the *Scientific Method*. Along with the *New Hypothesis*, also being tested is the proposition that ***Jesus***, as he is described in the New Testament, is the servant in "Isaiah 53".

Table V.B-1 contains results obtained thus far in the *Verification* stage and, for comparison, results obtained from testing the original *Hypothesis*, are shown in the column on the extreme right.

Table V.B-1 – Results from Verification stage of New Hypothesis for Isaiah 52:13-53:8

		New Hypothesis		Original Hypothesis
		Generic (from HB)	Specific (from NT)	
Isaiah	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**	**Does "*the Messiah*=Servant" Fit?**	**Does "*Jesus* = Servant" Fit?**	**Results from testing "*Israel* = Servant"**
52:13	Behold, My servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and he shall be very high.	YES	NO	YES
52:14	As many wondered about you, "How marred his appearance is from that of a man, and his features from that of people!"	NO	NO	YES
52:15	So shall he cause many nations to be startled; kings shall shut their mouths because of him, because that which had not been told to them they saw, and that which they had not heard they perceived.	YES	NO	YES
53:1	Who would have believed our report, and to whom was the arm of the Lord revealed?	NO	NO	YES

53:2	And he came up like a sapling before it, and like a root out from dry ground; he had no features and no splendor; and we saw him that he had no appearance; and how could we desire him?	NO	NO	YES
53:3	He was despised and forsaken by men; a man of pains, and accustomed to illness, and as one from whom we would hide our faces; he was despised, and we had no regard for him.	NO	NO	YES
53:4	Indeed, he bore our illnesses, and our pains – he has carried them, yet we had regarded him plagued, smitten by God, and oppressed.	NO	NO	YES
53:5	But he was pained because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities; the chastisement of our welfare was upon him, and with his wounds we were healed.	NO	NO	YES
53:6	We all went astray like sheep, we have turned, each one on his way, and the Lord inflicted upon him [or, accepted his prayers for] the iniquity of all of us.	NO	YES	YES
53:7	He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he would not open his mouth; like a lamb to the slaughter he would be brought, and like a ewe that is mute before her shearers, and he would not open his mouth.	NO	NO	YES
53:8	From imprisonment and from judgment he was taken, and his generation who shall tell? For he was cut off from the land of the living; because of the transgression of my people, a plague came upon them.	NO	NO	YES

VI. Segment 4 – Isaiah 53:9-12

The application of the *Scientific Method* to the Christian perspective on "Isaiah 53" continues with the analysis of the last segment.

A. Verification Stage – Testing the New Hypothesis

The *Verification* stage resumes with a verse-by-verse analysis of the *New Hypothesis*, along the two parallel paths described in Section III.B. One path contrasts what the Hebrew Bible teaches about ***the Messiah*** against the Hebrew text of "Isaiah 53". The parallel path contrasts the way that the New Testament portrays ***Jesus*** (Christianity's Messiah) against the Hebrew text of "Isaiah 53".

Isaiah 53:9

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:9	And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.	And he gave his grave to the wicked, and to the wealthy in his deaths, because he committed no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.	וַיִּתֵּן אֶת־רְשָׁעִים קִבְרוֹ וְאֶת־עָשִׁיר בְּמֹתָיו עַל לֹא־חָמָס עָשָׂה וְלֹא מִרְמָה בְּפִיו׃	נג,ט

(i) Matthew 27:57-60(KJV) – (57) When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: (58) He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. (59) And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, (60) And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.

1Peter 2:22(KJV) - Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

This verse describes the servant as non-violent and non-deceitful, who was put to death only because of his wealth, and buried as if he were a criminal.

✡ **[Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 53:9 apply to *the Messiah*?**

According to the Prophet Zephaniah, this description could well suit the righteous remnant of Israel:

> **Zephaniah 3:13 – The remnant of Israel shall neither commit injustice nor speak lies; neither shall deceitful speech be found in their mouth, for they shall graze and lie down, with no one to cause them to shudder.**

Although this appellation could include ***the Messiah***, since he will be part of Israel, such language is never used in the Hebrew Bible in connection with any of the prophecies that speak of him. Regarding the rest of the verse, there are no accounts in the Hebrew Bible that speak of ***the Messiah*** dying in the manner described here. Moreover, as was already demonstrated, the Hebrew language indicates that the servant here is a group of people, not a single individual.

✡ **[Hebrew Bible] Answer: No!**

✞ **[New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 53:9 apply to *Jesus*?**

There are two cross-referenced passages in the New Testament that point to portions of this verse. The first, Matthew 27:57-60, describes a wealthy man, Joseph of Arimathaea, who placed the body of ***Jesus*** in his own grave, which was most likely located in an exclusive section where the deceased rich people were entombed. Yet, just a few verses earlier ***Jesus*** is described as having died among the wicked:

> **Matthew 27:38(KJV) – Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.** [See also Mark 15:27.]

So, aside from the problem created by the fact that the servant is a group, not an individual, it appears that the circumstances described in the New Testament were reversed from those stated in the literal sense of the verse in the Hebrew Bible.

The second reference, 1Peter 2:22, points to the last two phrases in the verse, alleging that ***Jesus*** committed no violence and did not speak a lie. The accounts in the New Testament belie these claims.

Did ***Jesus*** engage in any activities that could be described as violent? Noting that violence, whether or not it is justified, is still violence, consider the following account in New Testament:

> **John 2:15(KJV) – So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables.** [See also Matthew 21:12; Mark 11:15; Luke 19:45.]

If this account is true, ***Jesus*** committed acts of violence when he attacked the merchants, dispersed their coins, and overturned the furniture in the Temple.

Would the following be words of a peaceful and non-violent person?

> **Matthew 10:34-36(KJV) – (34) Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. (35) For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. (36) And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.** [See also Luke 12:51-53.]
>
> **Luke 19:27(KJV) – But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.**

Jesus appears to be coming not to bring peace but strife to humanity, and orders to have his foes brought before him and slain.

The New Testament describes other examples of behavior by ***Jesus*** which can be characterized as violent acts. For example, ***Jesus*** caused the drowning death of a herd of swine by having demons possess them (Matthew

8:32, Mark 5:13, Luke 8:33); and he destroyed a fig tree for not bearing fruit out of season (Matthew 21:18-21, Mark 11:13-14).

Concerning deceit in the servant's mouth, did ***Jesus*** ever speak a lie or deceive someone? The New Testament includes accounts which testify to the fact that ***Jesus*** was guilty of lying and deceiving:

> **Matthew 16:27-28(KJV) – (27) For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. (28) Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.**

Are any of those whom ***Jesus*** allegedly addressed with these words still alive today awaiting his (second) coming? After all, ***Jesus*** (the Son of man) has not yet returned to establish his kingdom. Similarly, ***Jesus*** did not speak the truth when he assured his disciples that the end of the world order and his own triumphant return to judge all men would occur before the generation then living had passed away:

> **Matthew 24:34(KJV) – Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.** [See also Mark 13:30; Luke 21:32.]

In fact, in the era following the alleged resurrection of ***Jesus***, the author of the Book of Revelation, the last book in the New Testament, still quotes him as promising to return in the near future and reward all his followers:

> **Revelation 22:7,12,20(KJV) – (7) Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.**
> **(12) And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.**
> **(20) He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.**

What does “quickly” mean? After nearly two millennia beyond the days when those words were allegedly spoken, ***Jesus*** has still not returned.

Then there is the following promise by ***Jesus*** to his followers:

> **Mark 16:17-18(KJV) – (17) And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; (18) They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.**

Are there any followers of ***Jesus*** alive today who can safely drink poison, and heal the sick without medical knowledge?

Then there is the following promise by ***Jesus***:

> **John 14:12-14(KJV) – (12) Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. (13) And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. (14) If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.**

Does someone know of any Christians who have had all of their wishes granted? Why are not all Christians healthy, wealthy, and in charge of the world? This passage is reminiscent of the story about the genie inside a bottle who grants an endless number of wishes to its owner.

The New Testament contains other examples of deceitful behavior by ***Jesus***:

- **He deceived his disciples by promising a hundredfold of material possessions in this life to those who left everything in order to follow him (Mark 10:28-30), which has not happened!**
- **He claims to have spoken openly to everyone when he was questioned by the Jewish authorities (John 18:19-21). Yet, several accounts describe instances when Jesus demanded secrecy of those to whom he spoke (Matthew 16:20; Mark 8:30; Luke 9:21).**
- **He admonished his disciples not to divulge the fact that he was the Messiah.**
- **He demanded of the devils he exorcised to keep his deeds a secret (Mark 1:34, 3:11-12; Luke 4:41)**
- **Of those who he healed, he demanded that they not tell he cured them (Matthew 8:3-4, 12:15-16; Mark 1:44, 5:43, 7:36; Luke 5:14, 8:56).**

Do these actions describe works of an upright person? Quite to the contrary, they testify that ***Jesus*** acted violently and deceptively.

- **[New Testament] Answer: No!**

Sidebar Note: Based on the analysis and correct understanding of the Hebrew text of Isaiah 53:8&9, it is established that the servant in "Isaiah 53" cannot be an individual. Rather, the servant is an entity that consists of a collection of people, a group. This fact has an impact on the analysis of the remaining three verses, but it may be set aside at times in order to focus on some other issues.

ISAIAH 53:10

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:10	Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.	And the Lord wished to crush him, He made him ill; if his soul would acknowledge guilt, he shall have descendants [*or*, he shall see progeny], he shall prolong his days, and God's purpose shall prosper in his hand.	וַיהוה חָפֵץ דַּכְּאוֹ הֶחֱלִי אִם־תָּשִׂים אָשָׁם נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְאֶה זֶרַע יַאֲרִיךְ יָמִים וְחֵפֶץ יהוה בְּיָדוֹ יִצְלָח׃	נג,י

(ii) John 1:29(KJV) - The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

This verse describes a servant who was punished at God's behest, yet was also promised children, a long life, and success as rewards for his repentance.

✡ **[Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 53:10 apply to *the Messiah*?**

Since the servant cannot be an individual but an entity, i.e., a group, ***the Messiah*** is excluded as the servant in Isaiah 53:10. However, setting aside this fact for a moment, it is noted that, in Isaiah 53:10, God promises to reward the servant for acknowledging his iniquity and his subsequent repentance. While the Hebrew Bible frequently speaks of promises made or rewards that would accrue to the Jewish people if they do God's will, such rewards are not individually promised to ***the Messiah***.

✡ **[Hebrew Bible] Answer: No!**

✞ **[New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 53:10 apply to *Jesus*?**

In cross-referencing this verse and John 1:29, the New Testament points specifically at the phrase "**... when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin ...**" as it appears in common Christian translations. However, it was already demonstrated that the correct (Jewish) context differs significantly from the context being implied by Christian translations. Consequently, there is no need to further comment on this reference at John 1:29.

"**... And the Lord wished to crush him, He made him ill ...**": According to the New Testament, the only one who was to be crushed by God is Satan, not ***Jesus*** (Romans 16:20). Of what sickness did ***Jesus*** suffer? Why would God want to crush ***Jesus*** and make him ill? If he was crushed and sick, then how, according to the Christian interpretation of this verse, could ***Jesus*** be a perfect and unblemished sacrificial offering?

"**... if his soul would acknowledge guilt ...**": How could a "sinless" ***Jesus*** acknowledge any guilt? According to the Christian interpretation, this phrase speaks of ***Jesus*** offering himself as *a guilt offering*, [אָשָׁם (***ASHAM***) in the Hebrew text of the verse], one that is supposed to effect atonement for a limited class of intentional sins. Yet, the New Testament, pointing at the Paschal Lamb (Exodus 12), also refers to ***Jesus*** as "**the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world**" (John 1:29). So, notwithstanding the fact that the Paschal Lamb did not serve to atone for any sins, how could ***Jesus*** be both at once? After all, each of these two sacrificial offerings had a different purpose.

This phrase "**... when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin ...**" cannot apply to ***Jesus*** even according to the Christian rendition. Did ***Jesus*** offer his soul (spirit), or did he offer his body (flesh)? If this was the purpose for God coming to earth in the flesh, why is it necessary to have here the conditional "when" (or, "if" in some Christian renditions)? Was there a chance that ***Jesus*** would not offer himself? As was already noted earlier, ***Jesus*** was not necessarily a willing party to this sacrifice (Matthew 26:39, 27:46; Mark 14:36,

15:34; Luke 22:42, 23:46; John 19:30; Hebrews 5:7). It appears that ***Jesus*** died against his will, so that he really offered nothing at all.

"**… he shall have descendants [or, he shall see progeny] …**": It was previously established that the use in the Hebrew Bible of idiomatic expressions such as "*seeing seed*" always refers to physical seed, whether it is plant, animal, or human seed. According to the New Testament and other Christian sources, ***Jesus*** never fathered any children, so it is evident that he did not enjoy the promise of this reward.

"**… he shall prolong his days …**" It was also previously established that the use in the Hebrew Bible of the idiomatic expression "*[to] prolong days*" refers exclusively to extending a person's mortal lifetime on earth. One of the psalms speaks of what such a mortal lifetime might be:

> **Psalms 90:10 - The days of our years among them are seventy years, and if with might, eighty years; and their proudest success is but toil and pain, for it passes quickly and we fly away.**

It is 70-80 years! Yet, the New Testament contains the following account:

> **Luke 3:23(KJV) - And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli,**

Accordingly, ***Jesus*** started his ministry around the age of 30, and he was crucified some three years later, so that he was in his early thirties when he died, which hardly qualifies as having prolonged days, even according to Biblical standards.

The Hebrew Bible teaches that the above two rewards – children and a long life, the two greatest rewards God gives to mankind here on earth – come at the same time:

> **Isaiah 65:20-23 – (20) There shall no longer be from there a youth or an old man who will not fill his days, for the youth who is one hundred years old shall die, and the sinner who is one hundred years old shall be cursed. (21) And they shall build houses and inhabit them, and they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. (22) They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat, for like the days of the tree are the days of My people, and My elect shall outlive their handiwork. (23) They shall not toil in vain, neither shall they bear for terror, for they are seed blessed by the Lord, and their offspring shall be with them.** [See also Job 5:25-26.]

Clearly, ***Jesus*** enjoyed neither of these rewards during his lifetime.

"**… and God's purpose shall prosper in his hand …**": According to accounts in the New Testament, ***Jesus*** was well aware of the purpose of his mission, both on earth and destiny in heaven:

> **Matthew 16:21(KJV) - From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.**

John 6:38(KJV) – For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

John 8:14(KJV) – Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go.

Why would ***Jesus***, who is God manifest in the flesh according to most Christians, need to be promised by God a reward for doing God's will, and that he will be successful? What was the purpose of his being sent to earth if not to be successful? Would not an omniscient God know in advance that his incarnate divine "son" will fulfill all that was supposed to be done? Why would a heaven-bound being have to be promised earthly rewards such as a long life and children? Perhaps this verse shows that God's servant could not possibly be divine.

✞ **[New Testament] Answer: No!**

ISAIAH 53:11

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:11	He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.	From the toil of his soul he shall see [and he shall] be satisfied; with his knowledge My servant will vindicate the righteous before the multitudes, and their iniquities he shall carry.	מֵעֲמַל נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְאֶה יִשְׂבָּע בְּדַעְתּוֹ יַצְדִּיק צַדִּיק עַבְדִּי לָרַבִּים וַעֲוֹנֹתָם הוּא יִסְבֹּל׃	נג,יא

(iii) John 10:14-18(KJV) – (14) I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. (15) As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. (16) And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. (17) Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. (18) No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

Romans 5:18-19(KJV) – (18) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. (19) For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

This verse describes how the servant will eventually see that God has had a special purpose in allowing such wickedness, and will be satisfied and will not challenge God's actions. The servant will vindicate mankind with his knowledge, and this will not come easily, since it will be at the expense of suffering inflicted by the multitudes.

✡ [Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 53:11 apply to ***the Messiah***?

While ***the Messiah*** will be a widely respected and recognized spiritual and military/political leader (e.g., Isaiah 2:3, 11:2; Daniel 7:14), this verse cannot apply to him as an individual, though he will be among those included in the entity called *My servant*.

✡ [Hebrew Bible] Answer: No!

✞ [New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 53:11 apply to ***Jesus***?

The first of the two New Testament cross-referenced passages to this verse, John 10:14-18, alludes to (the divine) ***Jesus*** claiming equality with the Father and carrying out his ordained mission by laying down his life and being satisfied, and how he will be satisfied as the shepherd. The second passage, Romans 5:18-19, conveys the message that mankind, which became infected with sin by what Adam had done, is justified through the work of ***Jesus***. These references reflect the Christian mistranslation and misinterpretation of this verse, which are not consistent with the Hebrew text and its context.

In addition to the fact that the servant cannot be an individual, and contrary to Christian theology, this verse explains how the people will be vindicated by the servant's knowledge and not through his suffering, shed blood, and death.

✞ [New Testament] Answer: No!

ISAIAH 53:12

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:12	Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.	Therefore, I will allot him a portion among the multitudes, and with the mighty he shall share booty, because he has bared his soul to death, and with transgressors he was counted; and he bore the sin of many, and he will [continue to] intercede for the transgressors.	לָכֵן אֲחַלֶּק־לוֹ בָרַבִּים וְאֶת־עֲצוּמִים יְחַלֵּק שָׁלָל תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱרָה לַמָּוֶת נַפְשׁוֹ וְאֶת־פֹּשְׁעִים נִמְנָה וְהוּא חֵטְא־רַבִּים נָשָׂא וְלַפֹּשְׁעִים יַפְגִּיעַ׃	נג,יב

(iv) Matthew 26:38-39,42(KJV) – (38) Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. (39) And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. (42) He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

Mark 15:28(KJV) - And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.

Luke 22:37(KJV) - For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.

2Corinthians 5:21(KJV) - For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Philippians 2:9-11(KJV) – (9) Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: (10) That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; (11) And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This verse describes a servant who will be compensated for having risked his life in dangerous situations, even to the point where he was counted among the criminals. Although he has borne the effects of, and suffered from, the sins of others, he will continue to intercede on their behalf.

✡ **[Hebrew Bible] Question: Can Isaiah 53:12 apply to *the Messiah*?**

Although ***the Messiah*** will be counted among those collectively referred to as *My servant*, there are no references in the Hebrew Bible to him, as an individual, being rewarded, having suffered due to the actions of others, being counted among criminals, and interceding on behalf of others.

✡ **[Hebrew Bible] Answer: No!**

✞ **[New Testament] Question: Can Isaiah 53:12 apply to *Jesus*?**

The various New Testament cross-references again reflect Christian misinterpretations of the Hebrew text, some of which have already demonstrated that certain verses cannot apply to ***Jesus***.

The Hebrew word שָׁלָל (***shaLAL***), **booty**, which appears in this verse, is used throughout the Hebrew Bible exclusively to describe the spoils of war in a literal sense, i.e., taking possession of material goods that belong to others. Attempting to apply the phrase "**… and with the mighty he shall share booty …**" to ***Jesus*** raises some poignant questions: *Did **Jesus** ever fight in any war? Whom did he defeat? What were his spoils? With, or of, whom will **Jesus** be sharing the spoils of war?*

Lastly, since ***Jesus*** was allegedly sacrificed and gave up his human body, how then could he intercede for anyone? After his crucifixion, was he not up

in heaven as “one with the Father”? Should not he himself be the one to forgive?

✞ **[New Testament] Answer: No!**

VII. Additional Issues Regarding the Christian Interpretation of "Isaiah 53"

According to the accounts in the Gospels, the disciples never anticipated a dying Messiah. Peter acknowledges that ***Jesus*** was ***the Messiah***:

> **Matthew 16:16(KJV) – And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.**

Yet, when ***Jesus*** informs his disciples that he will be going to Jerusalem where he will be killed (Matthew 16:21), this is Peter's response:

> **Matthew 16:22(KJV) – Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.**

Peter did not appear to have had the expectation that ***Jesus***, as ***the Messiah***, was to fulfill "Isaiah 53". In fact, ***Jesus*** taught his disciples about what is to happen to him:

> **Mark 9:31(KJV) – For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.**

The following account in the New Testament describes their reaction:

> **Mark 9:32(KJV) – But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.**

These accounts leave no doubt that the disciples did not expect ***Jesus*** to fulfill “Isaiah 53” according to the common Christian interpretation of it as the scenario for his suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection. Rather, it appears that the common Christian interpretation of "Isaiah 53" is a later invention by the Church.

VIII. Summary

In this essay, the *Scientific Method* was used to examine the Christian perspective on "Isaiah 53". In order to do this as objectively as possible, the work done in Part I had to be set aside, and the process was restarted.

In the *Observation* stage, the desired fair sample of "data" was collected, and it consisted of the following four data elements:

> **Data Element #1: “My servant” is a reference by God to one of His servants.**

> **Data Element #2: The prophet Ezekiel refers to *the Messiah* as “My Servant”.**

> **Data Element #3: Christian writers agree with some Jewish writers that the**

	respective passages in the Book of Zechariah and in the Book of Psalms refer to *the Messiah*.
Data Element #4:	**A significant portion of Chapters 40-66 in the Book of Isaiah concerns the messianic era.**

In the *Generalization* Stage, a **New Hypothesis** was formulated for the Christian perspective:

> ✞ **New Hypothesis: *The Messiah* is the servant in "Isaiah 53".**

In the *Verification* Stage, this *New Hypothesis* was tested against the Hebrew text of the Hebrew Bible, and tested in parallel was the proposition that ***Jesus***, as he is described in the New Testament, could fit as the servant of "Isaiah 53". Table VIII-1 shows the results obtained from testing the *New Hypothesis*. For reference, results obtained from testing the original *Hypothesis* are also included.

Table VIII-1 – Results obtained from testing the New Hypothesis on Isaiah 52:13-53:12

		New Hypothesis		Original Hypothesis
		Generic (from HB)	Specific (from NT)	
Isaiah	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**	**Does "*the Messiah*=Servant" Fit?**	**Does "*Jesus* = Servant" Fit?**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
52:13	Behold, My servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and he shall be very high.	YES	NO	YES
52:14	As many wondered about you, "How marred his appearance is from that of a man, and his features from that of people!"	NO	NO	YES
52:15	So shall he cause many nations to be startled; kings shall shut their mouths because of him, because that which had not been told to them they saw, and that which they had not heard they perceived.	YES	NO	YES
53:1	Who would have believed our report, and to whom was the arm of the Lord revealed?	NO	NO	YES
53:2	And he came up like a sapling before it, and like a root out from dry ground; he had no features and no splendor; and we saw him that he had no appearance; and how could we desire him?	NO	NO	YES

53:3	He was despised and forsaken by men; a man of pains, and accustomed to illness, and as one from whom we would hide our faces; he was despised, and we had no regard for him.	NO	NO	YES
53:4	Indeed, he bore our illnesses, and our pains – he has carried them, yet we had regarded him plagued, smitten by God, and oppressed.	NO	NO	YES
53:5	But he was pained because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities; the chastisement of our welfare was upon him, and with his wounds we were healed.	NO	NO	YES
53:6	We all went astray like sheep, we have turned, each one on his way, and the Lord inflicted upon him [or, accepted his prayers for] the iniquity of all of us.	NO	YES	YES
53:7	He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he would not open his mouth; like a lamb to the slaughter he would be brought, and like a ewe that is mute before her shearers, and he would not open his mouth.	NO	NO	YES
53:8	From imprisonment and from judgment he was taken, and his generation who shall tell? For he was cut off from the land of the living; because of the transgression of my people, a plague came upon them.	NO	NO	YES
53:9	And he gave his grave to the wicked, and to the wealthy in his deaths, because he committed no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.	NO	NO	YES

53:10	**And the Lord wished to crush him, He made him ill; if his soul would acknowledge guilt, he shall have descendants [or, he shall see progeny], he shall prolong his days, and God's purpose shall prosper in his hand.**	**NO**	**NO**	**YES**
53:11	**From the toil of his soul he shall see [and he shall] be satisfied; with his knowledge My servant will vindicate the righteous before the multitudes, and their iniquities he shall carry.**	**NO**	**NO**	**YES**
53:12	**Therefore, I will allot him a portion among the multitudes, and with the mighty he shall share booty, because he has bared his soul to death, and with transgressors he was counted; and he bore the sin of many, and he will [continue to] intercede for the transgressors.**	**NO**	**NO**	**YES**
Scores:		**YES = 2** **NO = 13**	**YES = 1** **NO = 14**	**YES = 15** **NO = 0**

The results obtained from the *Verification* stage demonstrate that neither ***the Messiah*** nor ***Jesus*** can be considered as viable candidates for the servant in "Isaiah 53". Consequently, the *New Hypothesis* [**the *Messiah*** = **Servant**] and its parallel Christian extension [***Jesus*** = **Servant**] are not valid and must, therefore, be rejected.

✞ **Conclusion: The Christian interpretation of "Isaiah 53" is false, since neither *the Messiah* nor *Jesus* can be identified as the entity being referred to as "My servant".**

Final Conclusion for Parts I & II: The Jewish interpretation of Isaiah's Fourth Servant Song ("Isaiah 53") that *Israel* is the identity of the entity being referred to as "My servant" is correct.

WHO IS THE SUFFERING SERVANT IN "ISAIAH 53"?
PART I - THE JEWISH INTERPRETATION: VALID OR NOT?[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

The Book of Isaiah contains four passages commonly known as the **Four Servant Songs**: (1) **Isaiah 42:1-4**, (2) **Isaiah 49:1-6**, (3) **Isaiah 50:4-9**, (4) **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**. Three of these *Four Servant Songs* (#1, #2, #4) explicitly use the Hebrew term עַבְדִּי, (***avDI***), **My servant**,[2] while in #3 such terminology is absent. Yet, the description of the subject's characteristics in #3 is so strikingly similar to those of the one to which the other three passages refer as עַבְדִּי, that it is included in the set of four. These *Four Servant Songs* are considered as passages of exceptional expressive beauty (especially in the Hebrew language) and great religious depth. According to the major Jewish commentators, it is apparent that three of these *Four Servant Songs* also present some interpretive challenges since our Jewish Sages do not always concur on the identity of the servant in them. The only exception is the **Fourth Servant Song**, commonly referred to as "**Isaiah 53**", where the Sages all agree that the servant is the righteous remnant of Israel, and henceforth referred to as **Israel**. Consequently, from the perspective of Judaism, "Isaiah 53" is not a passage about מָשִׁיחַ (***maSHI'ah***), the promised **King/Messiah**, of Judaism, in its plain reading (***PSHAT***).[3]

By contrast, most Christians, including the Christian missionaries, consider the *Fourth Servant Song* to be one of the most important so-called "proof texts" in the Christian messianic vision. With its many references to "Isaiah 53", the New

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:

- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "h"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

[2] This term is the 1st-person, singular inflection of the noun עֶבֶד, (***Eved***), **a servant**, **a slave**.

[3] The methodology of Jewish biblical exegesis consists of four levels: **plain reading** (פְּשָׁט **–** ***PSHAT***), **symbolic reading** (רֶמֶז **-** ***REmez***), **homiletic reading** (דְּרָשׁ - ***DRASH***; also דְּרוּשׁ **-** ***DRUSH***), and **mystical reading** (סוֹד **-** ***SOD***). These four levels are commonly referred to by their Hebrew acronym פרד״ס (***parDES***). Whereas all four levels are important and have heuristic value the conceptual understanding of biblical passages, according to Judaism's rules of exegesis, the actual meaning of a passage is derived from the plain reading and cannot be changed by the other three levels.

Testament provides for believing Christians a record of the fulfillment of the prophecy of a suffering and dying Messiah and his eventual return, triumph, and glory. Curiously, this is all being accepted and believed even though the common reference terms used in the Hebrew Bible for the promised Messiah, such as *David*, *son of David*, or *king*, are conspicuously absent from the plain text of "Isaiah 53". Moreover, a suffering and dying Messiah is not part of the traditional Jewish messianic paradigm, according to which the promised future king of (a united) Israel, מָשִׁיחַ, shows up only once and will successfully execute the messianic agenda, as it is described in the Hebrew Bible, during his reign.

It is interesting to note that not all Christians subscribe to this view on "Isaiah 53". Several prominent Christian sources agree with the common Jewish perspective that the **suffering servant** in the *Fourth Servant Song* is a reference to collective Israel, the Jewish people. For example, Christian bibles, such as the *New Revised Standard Version Bible* (NRSV), *The New Jerusalem Bible*, and *The Oxford Study Bible*, identify Israel as the suffering servant of "Isaiah 53".

This essay subjects the *Fourth Servant Song* to a rigorous analysis in which the Jewish interpretation of "Isaiah 53" is tested against a combination of the teachings of the Hebrew Bible and the historical record. The analysis employs a well-known and widely used methodology from the domain of research and discovery, the ***Scientific Method***, which has been adapted and applied to the entire process of validation. In a subsequent essay, the Christian interpretation will be subjected to a similar process.[4]

II. WHAT IS THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD?

In scientific and other disciplines, researchers follow a process known as the ***Scientific Method***, a methodology that usually involves four stages:

① First is the ***Observation*** stage. The study of any phenomenon must start with the collection of data (observations) and their systematic arrangement.

② Second is the ***Generalization*** stage. Not all data related to an event can ever be observed, as this would involve an infinite number of observations of the occurrences of a particular phenomenon. It is usually desired to draw conclusions without waiting for future occurrences. Thus, it is assumed that the facts obtained in the previous stage constitute a fair sample, and that a generalized statement about them can be made. This generalized statement is a tentative scientific law, which is yet unproved – a ***hypothesis***.

③ Third is the ***Verification*** stage. If the hypothesis is a useful one, likely to become a valid scientific law, it will have a wider range of applications than that covered by the original observations. It can be used as a model from which to predict expected occurrences in this broader realm. This newly deduced information must then be tested in order to determine whether it is, in fact, correct. If the confirmation agrees with the prediction, the hypothesis becomes firmly established as a rule or law.

[4] *Who Is the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53? Part II - The Christian Interpretation, Valid or Not?* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Isa53CP.pdf

④ Fourth and last is the ***Application*** stage. Once the *Verification* stage has been completed and the hypothesis validated, the scientific law can be used to predict, with confidence, future results. These results may then be used to expand the scope of the original observations.

In this study of the *Fourth Servant Song*, the ***Observation*** stage consists of an iterative process that yields the desired fair sample of "data". In the ***Generalization*** stage, this sample is used in formulating a hypothesis. The validity of this hypothesis is then tested in the ***Verification*** stage, which involves a verse-by-verse analysis of the entire passage. The ***Application*** stage of the ***Scientific Method*** cannot be adapted to this particular study, since the results obtained apply only to this specific situation and, unlike scientific research, cannot be generally applied to widen the scope of the study. However, this does not affect the results and conclusions..

Clearly, when studying the Hebrew Bible, one is not dealing with observed data from natural or social phenomena that need to be subjected to complex and rigorous statistical testing and analysis for the purpose of research and discovery. However, there is information ("data") contained within the Hebrew Bible, some of which is being misrepresented and misused by Christian missionaries in promoting their claims through their own interpretations. A rigorous approach to the processing of this "data" proves to be very helpful in effectively dealing with such claims.

The analysis presented herein demonstrates how elements of the ***Scientific Method*** can be adapted to polemics and, along with a thorough knowledge and understanding of the Hebrew language and the Hebrew Bible, forms a powerful tool for countering and successfully refuting the claims made by Christian missionaries.

The length and detail of this analysis of "Isaiah 53" necessitate dividing it into four internal segments – Isaiah 52:13-15, Isaiah 53:1-4, Isaiah 53:5-8, and Isaiah 53:9-12 – each of which is separately processed and the results cumulatively summarized at the end of each segment.

III. SEGMENT 1 – ISAIAH 52:13-15

A. The Hebrew text with Jewish and Christian translations

Side-by-side English renditions and the Hebrew text of Isaiah 52:13-15, are displayed in Table III.A-1. The King James Version (KJV) translation is shown with pointers to cross-referenced passages in the New Testament. These references are taken from the New American Standard Bible (NASB). However, the corresponding passages below the table are quoted from the KJV for consistency.

<u>Table III.A-1</u> – Isaiah 52:13-15

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
52:13	Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.	Behold, My servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and he shall be very high.	הִנֵּה יַשְׂכִּיל עַבְדִּי יָרוּם וְנִשָּׂא וְגָבַהּ מְאֹד׃	נב,יג
52:14	As many were astonied at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:	As many wondered about you, "How marred his appearance is from that of a man, and his features from that of people!"	כַּאֲשֶׁר שָׁמְמוּ עָלֶיךָ כֵּן־מִשְׁחַת מֵאִישׁ מַרְאֵהוּ וְתֹאֲרוֹ מִבְּנֵי אָדָם׃	נב,יד
52:15	So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.(i)	So shall he cause many nations to be startled; kings shall shut their mouths because of him, because that which had not been told to them they saw, and that which they had not heard they perceived.	כֵּן יַזֶּה גּוֹיִם רַבִּים עָלָיו יִקְפְּצוּ מְלָכִים פִּיהֶם כִּי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־סֻפַּר לָהֶם רָאוּ וַאֲשֶׁר לֹא־שָׁמְעוּ הִתְבּוֹנָנוּ׃	נב,טו

(i) <u>Romans 15:21(KJV)</u> - But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

Before this passage can be analyzed via the *Scientific Method*, the *Scientific Method* itself must be initiated, a step that involves the execution of the *Observation* stage and the *Application* stage.

B. Formulating a hypothesis on the identity of the servant

The overall goal of this study is to determine the identity of the servant, who is the subject in the *Fourth Servant Song*.

The opening verse, Isaiah 52:13, provides an opportunity to apply the first stage of the *Scientific Method*, *Observation*, i.e., to collect, record, and organize the "data" in a systematic manner that facilitates the preparation of a useful sample of "data" for the next stage. This verse invokes a reference to a servant, specifically, to **My servant**, עַבְדִּי. Here, Isaiah, speaking in the name of God, describes one of God's servants, and this becomes the first data element in the sample being collected in the *Observation* stage:

<u>Data Element #1</u>: "My servant" is a reference by God to one of His servants.

What other "data" (observations) might be relevant to an entity to which God refers in this way, i.e., as עַבְדִּי? Table III.B-1 shows the result of a search for all instances in the Hebrew Bible of the expression עַבְדִּי that refer specifically to a servant of God.

Table III.B-1 – Identified instances of עַבְדִּי in the Hebrew Bible

Book	#	Name of Servant	Reference
Genesis	1	Abraham	26:24
Numbers	2	Moses; Caleb*	12:7,8; 14:24*
Joshua	1	Moses	1:2,7
2Samuel	1	David	3:18, 7:5,8
1Kings	1	David	11:13,32,34,36,38, 14:8
2Kings	2	Moses; David	21:8; 19:34, 20:6
Isaiah	4/"X"	Isaiah; Eliakim; David; Israel-Jacob-Jeshurun; "not explicitly named"	20.3; 22:20; 37:35; 41:8,9, 43:10**, 44:1,2,21(2x), 45:4, 49:3; "42:1,19, 52:13, 53:11"
Jeremiah	3	Nebuchadnezzar; Israel-Jacob; David	25:9, 27:6, 43:10; 30:10, 46:27,28; 33:21,22,26
Ezekiel	2	Israel/Jacob; David	28:25, 37:25; 34:23,24, 37:24,25
Haggai	1	Zerubbabel	2:23
Zechariah	1	Tsemah	3:8
Malachi	1	Moses	3:22
Psalms	1	David	89:4,21
Job	1	Job	1:8, 2:3, 42:7,8(3x)
1Chronicles	1	David	17:4,7

* To facilitate correlation between **Name of Servant** and **Reference**, alternating highlighting is used when more than one name appears.

** Though not explicitly named, the context unambiguously identifies Israel/Jacob as servant.

Table III.B-1 contains the "raw data", from which it is evident that multiple entities in the Hebrew Bible are called עַבְדִּי by God. An important task in the *Observation* stage is to organize the data so that a suitable sample is obtained, a process that may require several iterations before a suitable sample can be extracted from the "raw data".

First iteration: With the passage under consideration being located in the Book of Isaiah, the first logical iteration in the process is to focus on the "data" therein. The recorded "data" for the Book of Isaiah indicate four explicitly identified entities and perhaps as many as four additional unidentified entities being referred to as עַבְדִּי. However, this is still an inadequate sample of "data" to be used in the next stage of the *Scientific Method*, and a sharper focus is required.

Second iteration: It stands to reason that, since the passage being studied is one of the *Four Servant Songs*, the next iteration in the process should focus the search for useful "data" on the general area in the Book of Isaiah that contains these passages, namely, Chapters 41-54. Table III.B-1 shows the 13 instances of עַבְדִּי that are present in this portion of the Book of Isaiah. Of these 13 instances, in eight cases only one entity is explicitly identified as עַבְדִּי, namely, ***Israel***; in one case עַבְדִּי can be positively identified as ***Israel*** from the context; and the remaining four cases, including the two from the *Fourth Servant Song*, do not have an explicit reference to a specific entity. The passages in which the servant is explicitly identified as ***Israel*** are (highlighting added for emphasis throughout this document unless stated otherwise):

Isaiah 41:8-9 - (8) But you, Israel, are My servant [עַבְדִּי], Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham My friend. (9) You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called you from its farthest corners, and said to you, "you are My servant [עַבְדִּי]; I have chosen you and I [will] not cast you away".

Isaiah 44:1-2,21 - (1) Yet hear now, O Jacob My servant [עַבְדִּי], and Israel, whom I have chosen. Thus says the Lord your Maker, and He who formed you from the womb shall help you. (2) Fear not, My servant [עַבְדִּי] Jacob, and Jeshurun whom I have chosen.
(21) Remember these, O Jacob and Israel, for you are My servant [עַבְדִּי]; I have formed you; you are MY SERVANT [עַבְדִּי], O Israel, you shall not be forgotten of Me.

Isaiah 45:4 - For the sake of My servant [עַבְדִּי] Jacob, and Israel My chosen one, I called to you by your name.

Isaiah 49:3 - And [God] said to me: "you are My servant [עַבְדִּי], O Israel in whom I will be glorified!"

The one case in which ***Israel*** is identified from the context is (lead verse included to show context):

Isaiah 43:1,10 – (1) And now, so said the Lord, your Creator, O Jacob, and the One Who formed you, O Israel, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you, and I called by your name, you are Mine.
(10) "You are My witnesses," says the Lord, "and My servant [עַבְדִּי] whom I chose," in order that you know and believe Me, and understand that I am He; before Me no god was formed and after Me none shall be.

These eight cases and the one case (Isaiah 43:10) where the context provides a positive identification of ***Israel*** as God's servant, combine to form a useful sample of "data", which produces another data element:

Data Element #2: Nine instances located within the portion of the Book of Isaiah that includes the four Servant Songs – Isaiah 41:8,9, 43:10, 44:1,2,21(2x), 45:4, 49:3 – positively identify the servant as *Israel*.

Finally, the subject in the two adjacent chapters to the *Fourth Servant Song* – Isaiah 52 [from verse 1 through verse 12] and Isaiah 54 [in its entirety] – is indisputably the restored and redeemed nation of ***Israel.*** This generates another data element from this portion of the Book of Isaiah:

Data Element #3: *Israel* is the subject of the two chapters that surround the Fourth Servant Song.

Data Elements 1, 2, &3 comprise the set of "data" (or observations) with which it is now possible to proceed to the *Generalization* stage of the *Scientific Method* and formulate a hypothesis concerning the identity of the servant in Isaiah's *Fourth Servant Song*.

This is the hypothesis for the current analysis:

✡ **Hypothesis**: ***Israel*** **is the servant in the Fourth Servant Song.**

Since our hypothesis is only a preliminary identification of the servant as ***Israel***, this proposed explanation must now be tested, which is done in the *Verification* stage of the *Scientific Method* using a verse-by-verse analysis.

C. Analysis of Isaiah 52:13-15

Here starts the *Verification* stage of the *Scientific Method*. The preliminary identification of the servant as ***Israel*** has been postulated, and now it must be tested, using evidence from the Hebrew Bible as well as from the historical record, to validate whether ***Israel*** = **servant** "fits" into the context. A correct interpretation of the text is facilitated by knowing who the "speakers" are as one proceeds through the *Fourth Servant Song*. In the opening passage, Isaiah 52:13-15, it is God speaking through Isaiah, who conveys His message.

ISAIAH 52:13

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
52:13	Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.	Behold, My servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and he shall be very high.	הִנֵּה יַשְׂכִּיל עַבְדִּי יָרוּם וְנִשָּׂא וְגָבַהּ מְאֹד:	נב,יג

The highlighted terms are the Hebrew word עַבְדִּי and its respective translations. The two English renditions of the verse are similar. Viewed in the context of the current segment, Isaiah prophesies that God's servant, ***Israel***, will be exalted, an event that will cause much surprise among the (Gentile) nations.

That the servant is spoken of in the singular is not an issue here in terms of whether the servant can only be a single individual or may be a compound entity, such as a nation. To wit, as can be seen from the context and poetic motif surrounding "Isaiah 53", Isaiah refers to the servant (singular), עַבְדִּי, as God's witnesses (plural), עֵדַי, (***ei**DAI*), **My witnesses**, and he utilizes verbs that are conjugated in the 2nd-person plural form, תֵּדְעוּ וְתַאֲמִינוּ לִי וְתָבִינוּ, (***teiD'u** v^e^ta'AMINU LI v^e^taVINU*), **you will know and believe me, and understand**:

> **Isaiah 43:10 – "You are my witnesses [עֵדַי]", says the Lord, "and My servant [עַבְדִּי] whom I have chosen, so that you will know and believe Me, and understand [תֵּדְעוּ וְתַאֲמִינוּ לִי וְתָבִינוּ] that I am He; before Me no god was formed and after Me none shall be."**

Similarly, in the 52nd and 54th chapters, the prophet uses both singular and plural terms when he refers to ***Israel*** (e.g., Isaiah 52:1-3, Isaiah 54:1). This characteristic is not unique to Isaiah's style, it is rather common throughout the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Hosea 11:1-2,5).

✡ **Question:** **Does *Israel* (as God's servant) "fit" into Isaiah 52:13?**
✡ **Answer:** **YES!**

ISAIAH 52:14

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
52:14	As many were astonied at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:	As many wondered about you, "How marred his appearance is from that of a man, and his features from that of people!"	כַּאֲשֶׁר שָׁמְמוּ עָלֶיךָ כֵּן־מִשְׁחַת מֵאִישׁ מַרְאֵהוּ וְתֹאֲרוֹ מִבְּנֵי אָדָם:	נב,יד

The two English renditions of the verse are similar, though the Jewish version is clearer on who is speaking, and of whom this is being said. It is also worth noting that, in several Christian renditions, a subtle contextual change in this verse is effected by switching the pronoun from **you** to **him**, an action that is acknowledged via a footnote by some (e.g., NIV, RSV).

In the previous verse, Isaiah prophesies that, in the end, ***Israel*** will prosper and take its rightful place in God's plan. Here, in verse 14, the prophet, still speaking for God, describes how the (Gentile) nations habitually looked down upon [the nation of] ***Israel***; people who were thought of as being disfigured and "sub-human", people whose God was not with them. Still being the narrator here and speaking for God, Isaiah quotes what the (Gentile) nations will be saying about ***Israel*** in their astonishment. The dismayed (Gentile) nations will see a people, thought to be disfigured and "sub-human", become exalted and successful, a people who have God with them and not against them (e.g., Isaiah 52:9-10). Isaiah reassures his people, ***Israel***, that those who had such visions of them will be stunned when they see that ***Israel*** is the one who is exalted in the end.

✡ **Question:** **Does *Israel* (as God's servant) "fit" into Isaiah 52:14?**
✡ **Answer:** **YES!**

ISAIAH 52:15

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
52:15	So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.	So shall he cause many nations to be startled; kings shall shut their mouths because of him, because that which had not been told to them they saw, and that which they had not heard they perceived.	כֵּן יַזֶּה גּוֹיִם רַבִּים עָלָיו יִקְפְּצוּ מְלָכִים פִּיהֶם כִּי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־סֻפַּר לָהֶם רָאוּ וַאֲשֶׁר לֹא־שָׁמְעוּ הִתְבּוֹנָנוּ:	נב,טו

The highlighted terms are the Hebrew word **יַזֶּה** and its respective translations. Except for the discrepancy between the Jewish and KJV renditions of the Hebrew term יַזֶּה (***yaZEH***) as **shall he cause … to be startled** and **shall he sprinkle**,

respectively, the two English translations of the verse are similar. The discrepancy on יַזֶּה is significant and, therefore, further analysis is required.

The root verb נזה (***NUN-ZAyin-HEH***), which can take on any of the meanings **[to] sprinkle**, **[to] shake**, **[to] drip**, appears in the Hebrew Bible on 21 occasions in various conjugations, with and without prepositions, all of which are shown in Table III.C-1.

<u>Table III.C-1</u> – Applications of the verb נָזָה in the Hebrew Bible

Hebrew word		Transliteration	Translation	#	What Is Sprinkled?	References
1	יִזֶּה	***yiZEH***	will have been/has been sprinkled	2	blood	Leviticus 6:20(2x)
2	וְיֵז	***v^{e}YEIZ***	and … was sprinkled	1	blood	Isaiah 63:3
3	וַיִּז	***va'YIZ***	and … was sprinkled	1	blood	2Kings 9:33
4	וְהִזֵּיתָ	***v^{e}hiZEItah***	and you shall sprinkle	1	blood & oil	Exodus 29:21
5	וְהִזָּה	***v^{e}hiZAH***	and he shall sprinkle	10	blood	Leviticus 4:6,17, 5:9, 14:7,16,27,51,16:14,15,19 Numbers 19:4,18,19
6	וּמַזֵּה	***u'maZEH***	and [the one who] sprinkles	1	water	Numbers 19:21
7	יַזֶּה	***yaZEH***	he shall sprinkle	1	blood	Leviticus 16:14
8			**he shall [do what?]**	**1**	**not specified**	**Isaiah 52:15**
9	וַיַּז	***va'YAZ***	and he sprinkled	2	blood	Leviticus 8:11,30
10	הַזֵּה	***haZEH***	Sprinkle! (imperative)	1	water	Numbers 8:7

As Table III.C-1 shows, in <u>all but one</u> of the 21 applications, the substance that was, or was to be, sprinkled is explicitly specified in the respective passages. The two instances in which the word in question, יַזֶּה, appears require a closer look.

The Jewish and KJV renditions of the passage with the first of these two cases (#7 in the table) are:

> **<u>Leviticus 16:14</u> - And he shall take of the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the Ark cover on the eastern side; and in front of the Ark cover shall he sprinkle [יַזֶּה] with his finger from the blood seven times.**

> **<u>Leviticus 16:14(KJV)</u> - And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times.**

Both translations not only state that the blood from a slaughtered bull is to be sprinkled, but also that it is to be sprinkled with the (Priest's) finger upon the cover of the Ark. With Leviticus 16:14 as the "model", the KJV rendition of Isaiah 52:15 has the servant doing the sprinkling, but there is no mention of *what* will be sprinkled or *where and how* this “sprinkling” will be done. The question is: *Which translation of Isaiah 52:15, the Jewish translation or the KJV translation, is the correct one?*

The first clue is provided by the "data" shown in Table III.C-1, where it is clear that item #8 is different from the other 20 cases in the collection. Noting that, in general, the act of sprinkling is a direct result of a shaking motion by the agent who does the sprinkling, it is reasonable to posit that nothing is being sprinkled as it concerns item #8, which the case of Isaiah 52:15. Rather, that the appearance of this entity, עַבְדִּי, is what will cause those who are present to shake or tremble, perhaps from fear – a common reaction to being startled or surprised. After all, the term in question, יַזֶּה, is a verb in the ***hif'IL*** stem, an active causative form of the *pa'AL/QAL* stem in Hebrew grammar, which means that it reflects an outcome caused by the action of an external agent.

A second clue comes from two Biblical personal names that derive from the root verb נָזָה – יְזִיאֵל (***Y^e^zi'EL***) son of עַזְמָוֶת (***AzMAvet***) [1Chronicles 12:3] and יִזִּיָּה (***yiziYAH***) son of פַּרְעֹשׁ (***Par'OSH***) [Ezra 10:15]. As is commonplace with many Hebrew names, each of these two names combines a title of God with a verb or noun that describes some accolade, action, or attribute associated with Him. The possible meanings of the names יְזִיאֵל and יִזִּיָּה are similar (the bracketed portion applies to the latter): **God will sprinkle [me]**, **God will shake [me]**, **God will startle [me]**, all of which are plausible. However, since Hebrew names that involve at title of God generally project a positive message, perhaps the most likely meaning for these names is "**God will sprinkle [me]**", which raises the obvious question: *What is it that will be sprinkled by God?* One idea is that the sprinkling is a metaphor, or a euphemism, for "anointing", i.e., being chosen or selected for some mission in a manner similar to the way some prophets described the way they received their commission [e.g., Isaiah 49:1,5, 61:1; Jeremiah 1:5]. Another possible interpretation is that whatever will be "sprinkled" is something intangible, such as knowledge and wisdom, rather than a physical substance.

Although both of the above explanations work well for the names, they do not fit into the context of Isaiah 52:15 since no physical matter that will be sprinkled by the servant on the many (Gentile) nations, such as blood, oil, or water is explicitly mentioned. The literal scenario, that the servant is the one who will be doing that which is described with the verb יַזֶּה and the many (Gentile) nations are those who will be affected by this action, leads to the conclusion that the Jewish rendition of יַזֶּה in Isaiah 52:15 as, **shall he cause … to be startled** is the proper translation.[5]

The astonished, surprised, and dismayed (Gentile) nations will see ***Israel*** become exalted and successful, a people who have God with them and not

[5] It should be noted that, while the KJV and most other Christian Bibles mistranslate this term, several Christian translations either agree with the Jewish rendition (e.g., AMP ["startle"], RSV ["startle"], Darby ["astonish"]) or acknowledge it via a footnote (e.g., NIV ["sprinkle"; footnote: Hebrew; Septuagint *so will many nations marvel at him*], NLT ["startle"; footnote: Or cleanse], NKJV ["sprinkle"; footnote: Or startle]).

against them (e.g., Isaiah 52:9-10). As God's spokesperson, Isaiah reassures his people, ***Israel***, that those who had such visions of them will be stunned when they see that ***Israel*** is the one who is exalted in the end.

The intensity of the surprise these (Gentile) nations will experience will not only startle them, it will cause them to be dumbfounded. They will perceive events that were previously beyond their imagination, and their shock upon witnessing the exaltation of ***Israel*** is foretold in the Hebrew Bible:

> **<u>Isaiah 41:11</u> – Behold, all those who were incensed against you shall be ashamed and confounded; they who quarreled with you shall be as naught, and be lost.**

> **<u>Jeremiah 16:19-21</u> – (19) O Lord, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come to You from the ends of the earth, and shall say: "Only lies have our fathers handed down to us, emptiness in which there is no benefit." (20) Can a man make gods for himself, and they are no gods? (21) Therefore, behold I let them know; at this time I will let them know My power and My might, and they shall know that My Name is the Lord.**

> **<u>Micah 7:15-16</u> – (15) As in the days of your coming out of the land of Egypt will I show him wonders. (16) Nations shall see and be ashamed of all of their might; they shall lay a hand upon their mouth, their ears shall become deaf.**

> **<u>Psalms 48:5-7</u> – (5) For behold, the kings have assembled; they have passed together. (6) They saw, so they wondered; they were startled, yea, they were bewildered. (7) A quaking seized them there, pangs like [those of] a woman in confinement.**

In sharp contrast to the reaction of the (Gentile) nations, the prophets <u>never</u> foretell that the Jewish people will ever proclaim shock or will need to admit a mistake to the (Gentile) nations. In fact, just the opposite is prophesied:

> **<u>Zechariah 8:13,23</u> - (13) And it shall come to pass that, [just] as you were a curse among the nations, O House of Judah and House of Israel, so will I save you, and you shall be a blessing; fear not, may your hands be strengthened!**
> **(23) So said the Lord of hosts: "In those days, when ten men of all the languages of the nations shall take hold of the garment of a Jewish man, saying: 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you'."**

The Hebrew Bible makes it very clear who made the mistake. The mistaken ones are the (Gentile) nations, not the Jewish people!

✡ **<u>Question</u>: Does *Israel* (as God's servant) "fit" into Isaiah 52:15?**
✡ **<u>Answer</u>: YES!**

D. Interim Summary – Isaiah 52:13-15

The following hypothesis was formulated with the help of the *Scientific Method*:

✡ **<u>Hypothesis</u>: *Israel* is the servant in the Fourth Servant Song.**

In this segment, the hypothesis was tested on the opening three-verse segment of the *Fourth Servant Song*. The results of the analysis of these three verses, Isaiah 52:13-15, validate the identification of ***Israel*** as the servant for this opening passage, are summarized in Table III.D-1.

<u>Table III.D-1</u> – Summary of results from Verification stage: Isaiah 52:13-15

Isaiah	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Who Is The "Speaker"?	Does Hypothesis "*Israel* = Servant" Fit?
52:13	Behold, My servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and he shall be very high.	God	YES
52:14	As many wondered about you, "How marred his appearance is from that of a man, and his features from that of people!"	God	YES
52:15	So shall he cause many nations to be startled; kings shall shut their mouths because of him, because that which had not been told to them they saw, and that which they had not heard they perceived.	God	YES

IV. Segment 2 – Isaiah 53:1-4

A. The Hebrew Text with Jewish and Christian Translations

Side-by-side English renditions and the Hebrew text of the first portion of the *Fourth Servant Song*, Isaiah 53:1-4, are displayed in Table IV.A-1. The King James Version (KJV) translation is shown with pointers to cross-referenced passages in the New Testament. These references are taken from the New American Standard Bible (NASB). However, the corresponding passages below the table are quoted from the KJV for consistency.

<u>Table IV.A-1</u> – Isaiah 53:1-4

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:1	Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?(i)	Who would have believed our report, and to whom was the arm of the Lord revealed?	מִי הֶאֱמִין לִשְׁמֻעָתֵנוּ וּזְרוֹעַ יהוה עַל־מִי נִגְלָתָה׃	נג,א
53:2	For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.	And he came up like a sapling before it, and like a root out from dry ground; he had no features and no splendor; and we saw him that he had no appearance; and how could we desire him?	וַיַּעַל כַּיּוֹנֵק לְפָנָיו וְכַשֹּׁרֶשׁ מֵאֶרֶץ צִיָּה לֹא־תֹאַר לוֹ וְלֹא הָדָר וְנִרְאֵהוּ וְלֹא־מַרְאֶה וְנֶחְמְדֵהוּ׃	נג,ב
53:3	He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.(ii)	He was despised and forsaken by men; a man of pains, and accustomed to illness, and as one from whom we would hide our faces; he was despised, and we had no regard for him.	נִבְזֶה וַחֲדַל אִישִׁים אִישׁ מַכְאֹבוֹת וִידוּעַ חֹלִי וּכְמַסְתֵּר פָּנִים מִמֶּנּוּ נִבְזֶה וְלֹא חֲשַׁבְנֻהוּ׃	נג,ג

53:4	Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.(iii)	Indeed, he bore our illnesses and our pains – he has carried them, yet we had regarded him plagued, smitten by God, and oppressed.	אָכֵן חֳלָיֵנוּ הוּא נָשָׂא וּמַכְאֹבֵינוּ סְבָלָם וַאֲנַחְנוּ חֲשַׁבְנֻהוּ נָגוּעַ מֻכֵּה אלהים וּמְעֻנֶּה׃	נג,ד

(i) John 12:38(KJV) – That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?

Romans 10:16(KJV) – But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

(ii) Luke 18:31-33(KJV) – (31) Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. (32) For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: (33) And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. [See also Mark 10:33-34; John 1:10-11]

(iii) Matthew 8:17(KJV) – That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.

B. Analysis of Isaiah 53:1-4

An introductory "thumbnail sketch" of scenes out of Jewish history should help set the stage for understanding the next eight verses. This summary puts into perspective the confession of guilt and admission of unjust mistreatment of ***Israel*** by the (Gentile) nations as they begin to realize ***Israel***'s proper place and role in history.

Throughout their exile, the social ranking of Jews was often placed beneath that of domesticated animals. Jews have been demonized and vilified in terms of much non-human imagery, which caused Jewish blood and life to become cheap commodities (as described in another essay,[6] where it was demonstrated how this behavior can be traced to teachings of the New Testament). The following examples from Jewish history illustrate this:

- **Jews have been pictured with large hooked noses and hunched backs, and perceived as having an odd, characteristic Jewish aroma.**
- **Jews have been accused of sacrificing Christian children to the devil, who allegedly controls them, and using the blood of these children in the preparations for Passover ("Blood Libel").[7]**
- **Jews have been accused of poisoning wells and desecrating hosts.**
- **The skin of Jewish victims has been used to make lampshades, and the hair to weave fabric.**

To those who have hated and persecuted the Jews, their victims have been beyond human semblance. Because the Jewish people have endured so much

[6] *The Anti-Jewish New Testament* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/AntiJewishNT.pdf
[7] See, for example, *Two Christian myths against Jews: Blood libel & host desecration; 1144 CE to present time* - http://www.religioustolerance.org/jud_blib2.htm

suffering throughout their history, the description of the Jewish visage as being scarred from all the suffering while in their host countries is certainly an applicable metaphor. In fact, given the many medical experiments performed on Jews by the Nazis during the Holocaust, the "marred appearance" (Isaiah 52:14) of the victims can be understood even in the literal sense.

Against this backdrop, the *Verification* stage of the *Scientific Method* resumes with testing the hypothesis on the four verses in the current segment of the *Fourth Servant Song*, Isaiah 53:1-4. Evidence from the Hebrew Bible and from the historical record is used to check whether ***Israel*** = **servant** "fits" into the context.

The importance of knowing the identity of the "speakers" was pointed out at the start of the analysis. In the opening passage, Isaiah 52:13-15, it was the "voice" of God as recorded by Isaiah. As Chapter 53 opens, an abrupt change occurs in the "voice". From Isaiah 53:1 through Isaiah 53:8, the prophet conveys the words of the (Gentile) nations, i.e., the text reads as if it were coming from a spokesperson for, or the leaders of, the (Gentile) nations.

Isaiah 53:1

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:1	Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?	Who would have believed our report, and to whom was the arm of the Lord revealed?	מִי הֶאֱמִין לִשְׁמֻעָתֵנוּ וּזְרוֹעַ יהוה עַל־מִי נִגְלָתָה׃	נג,א

Aside from some variation in tenses, there are no significant differences between the two translations.

This is the opening verse of a passage in which the (Gentile) nations contrast their former scornful attitude toward the Jewish people (Isaiah 53:1-3) with their new realization of ***Israel***'s grandeur (Isaiah 53:4-7), and wherein the leaders of these (Gentile) nations express the magnitude of their shock at the received news with the information about ***Israel***'s greatness. Consequently, the answer to the opening question in this verse "**Who would have believed our report?**" is "**No one would have believed it.**", because the report was too incredible to be believed.

The second question in this verse "**to whom was the arm of the Lord revealed?**" contains an anthropomorphic reference to the “arm of the Lord”, which requires further comment before it can be answered.[8]

The Hebrew Bible contains scores of metaphoric references to God’s arm, hand, and finger, among others, and these generally represent God’s direct actions and

[8] A detailed investigation of the phrase “the arm of the Lord”, as used in the Hebrew Bible, is available in the essay *“Arm of the Lord” – Revealing the Truth and Exposing the Lie* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Arm.pdf

His acts of vindication. Such terms are commonly used throughout the Hebrew Bible to point to both the physical and spiritual redemption of the Jewish people from the hands of their oppressors, the (Gentile) nations (see, for example, Exodus 14:31, 15:6; Deuteronomy 4:34, 7:19; Is 51:9, 52:10, 62:8, 63:12; Jeremiah 21:5, 27:5; Ezekiel 20:33,34; Psalms 44:3, 98:1).

Israel's redemption and final vindication, witnessed by the surprised and astonished (Gentile) nations, is the central theme of the last 27 chapters in the Book of Isaiah. The two adjacent chapters to Isaiah 53, Chapters 52 and 54, speak of the salvation of the afflicted Jewish people in the presence of their persecutors, the (Gentile) nations:

> **Isaiah 52:9-12 – (9) Burst out in song, sing together, O ruins of Jerusalem, for the Lord has comforted His people. He has redeemed Jerusalem. (10) The Lord has revealed His Holy Arm to the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God! (11) Turn away, turn away, get out of there, touch no unclean one; get out of its midst, purify yourselves, you who bear the Lord's vessels. (12) For not with haste shall you go forth and not in a flurry of flight shall you go, for the Lord goes before you, and your rear guard is the God of Israel.**
>
> **Isaiah 54:7-10 – (7) "For a small moment have I forsaken you, and with great mercy will I gather you. (8) With a little wrath did I hide My countenance for a moment from you, and with everlasting kindness will I have compassion on you", said your Redeemer, the Lord. (9) "For this is to Me [as] the waters of Noah, as I swore that the waters of Noah shall never again pass over the earth, so have I sworn neither to be wroth with you nor to rebuke you. (10) For the mountains shall depart and the hills totter, but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My Peace totter", said the Lord, Who has compassion on you.**

Therefore, the answer to the second question in the verse "**to whom was the arm of the Lord revealed?**" is "**To *Israel*, in the presence of the (Gentile) nations.**" In other words, ***Israel*** merited the manifestation of God's power; whereas the (Gentile) nations never earned it on their own merit.

✡ **Question:** **Does *Israel* (as God's servant) "fit" into Isaiah 53:1?**
✡ **Answer:** **YES!**

ISAIAH 53:2

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:2	For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.	And he came up like a sapling before it, and like a root out from dry ground; he had no features and no splendor; and we saw him and he had no appearance; and how could we desire him?	וַיַּעַל כַּיּוֹנֵק לְפָנָיו וְכַשֹּׁרֶשׁ מֵאֶרֶץ צִיָּה לֹא-תֹאַר לוֹ וְלֹא הָדָר וְנִרְאֵהוּ וְלֹא-מַרְאֶה וְנֶחְמְדֵהוּ:	נג,ב

A comparison of the two English renditions reveals significant differences in the tenses of verbs. Namely, the KJV shows verbs in the future tense, whereas the corresponding Hebrew verbs are conjugated in the past tense. Since Isaiah

52:15 clearly indicates that the next passage is spoken at some time in the future from a past tense perspective, i.e., the future speaker will be “looking back” when saying this, the KJV translation is in error by projecting the context of this verse into the future.

Isaiah 53:2 begins to describe, via metaphoric language, the reasons for the disbelief expressed by the (leaders of the Gentile) nations in the preceding verse. Throughout their harsh and dangerous exile, the Jewish people struggled like a young tree that is trying to grow on parched land. Examples of the imagery of a tree struggling to grow in dry earth as a metaphor for ***Israel***'s struggle to survive in exile are found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible:

> **Ezekiel 19:10-13 – (10) Your mother is like a vine in your likeness, planted by the water, fruitful and full of branches from the abundance of water. (11) And it had sturdy rods for the scepters of rulers, and its stature was exalted among the thick branches, and it could be seen because of its height with its multitude of tendrils. (12) But it was plucked up in fury and it was cast down to the ground, and the east wind dried up its fruit; its sturdy rods were broken and withered – fire consumed them. (13) And now it is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty ground.**

However, the future will be different. By employing similar metaphors, the prophets foretell that things will change:

> **Isaiah 60:21 – And your people, all of them righteous, shall inherit the land forever, the scion of My planting, the work of My hands in which I will glory.**

> **Hosea 14:6-8 – (6) I will be like dew to Israel, he shall blossom like the lily, and strike his roots like the [roots of trees of] Lebanon. (7) His [young] branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be like the olive tree, and his aroma like the Lebanon. (8) Those who dwell in his shade shall return; they shall revive like grain and blossom like the vine; their fragrance shall be like the wine of Lebanon.**

> **Amos 9:15 – "And I will plant them on their land, and they shall no longer be uprooted from their land that I have given to them," said the Lord your God.**

This is a rather different picture from that which was described by the (Gentile) nations in Isaiah 53:2. Instead of a beaten and struggling people, ***Israel*** will be an exalted and successful people.

✡ **Question: Does *Israel* (as God's servant) "fit" into Isaiah 53:2?**
✡ **Answer: YES!**

ISAIAH 53:3

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:3	He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.	He was despised and forsaken by men; a man of pains, and accustomed to illness, and as one from whom we would hide our faces; he was despised, and we had no regard for him.	נִבְזֶה וַחֲדַל אִישִׁים אִישׁ מַכְאֹבוֹת וִידוּעַ חֹלִי וּכְמַסְתֵּר פָּנִים מִמֶּנּוּ נִבְזֶה וְלֹא חֲשַׁבְנֻהוּ:	נג,ג

A comparison of the two English renditions reveals significant differences, as was the case with the previous verse. In this verse, the KJV shows some verbs in the present tense, yet the corresponding Hebrew verbs are conjugated in the past tense. There are also some issues of incorrect translation, although these do not impact the context to the extent that the incorrect renditions of the tenses do. In terms of the timeline, as defined in the previous verse, the KJV usage of the verbs is incorrect.

Similar to this verse, ***Israel*** is described elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible as being despised:

> **Isaiah 49:7 – Thus said the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, his Holy One, to him who is despised of men, to him who is abhorred by nations, to him who is a slave of rulers, …**
>
> **Nehemiah 3:36 – Hearken, our God, for we have been despised, and return their reproach upon their head, and make them despised in a land of captivity.**

Israel is also described as being forsaken:

> **Isaiah 60:15 – Instead of your being forsaken and hated without a passerby, I will make you an everlasting pride, the joy of every generation.**

Israel is described as being afflicted, with the adversities often likened to injuries and diseases:

> **Isaiah 1:5-6 – (5) Why are you beaten when you continue to rebel? Every head is [afflicted] with illness and every heart with malaise. (6) From the sole of the foot to the head, nothing in him is whole; only wounds and contusions and fresh sores; they have not been treated, and they have not been bandaged, and [the wound] has not been softened with oil.**
>
> **Jeremiah 10:19 – Woe is to me for my hurt; my wound is acute, and I said [to myself], "This is but an illness, I will bear it".**

Isaiah 53:3 describes the one whom the (Gentile) nations characterize as having been despised, as being a "man of pains" who is accustomed to illness, and similar pictures were drawn elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. The lesson here is that all this has been going on for long periods of time, for centuries. Therefore, these descriptions can only be of a people, not of a single individual.

✡ **Question: Does *Israel* (as God's servant) "fit" into Isaiah 53:3?**
✡ **Answer: YES!**

A change in perspective starts to emerge from the next set of four verses, which are still spoken in the "voice" of the (Gentile) nations' leaders. The leaders of the (Gentile) nations begin to realize that ***Israel*** had suffered because of them.

ISAIAH 53:4

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:4	Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.	Indeed, he bore our illnesses and our pains – he has carried them, yet we had regarded him plagued, smitten by God, and oppressed.	אָכֵן חֳלָיֵנוּ הוּא נָשָׂא וּמַכְאֹבֵינוּ סְבָלָם וַאֲנַחְנוּ חֲשַׁבְנֻהוּ נָגוּעַ מֻכֵּה אלהים וּמְעֻנֶּה׃	נג,ד

Here, the KJV suddenly reverts to the past tense, which makes it somewhat more consistent with the Jewish translation and with the Hebrew text, yet raises some questions regarding its translations of the previous three verses.

As noted at the end of the analysis of the previous verse, the leaders of the (Gentile) nations are beginning to see their role in the suffering of ***Israel***. These leaders may have been saying something such as the following:

> ***We despised the Jewish people because we saw nothing worthwhile in them. Eventually, we pushed our own troubles on them, using them as a convenient scapegoat, thereby allowing us to escape our problems. We now realize that, in blaming the Jewish people for our troubles, we have sinned and caused them much pain - they suffered directly from our sins. As we saw them suffer, we told them that God was the one who caused this pain, it was their own fault. Yet, in truth, they suffered from us alone, not so much because of God.*** [The source for this is unknown.]

The prophet Jeremiah alludes to the actions of the (Gentile) nations when he speaks of the redemption of God's servant, ***Israel***:

> **Jeremiah 30:10,17 – (10) "And you, fear not, My servant Jacob," says the Lord, "and do not be dismayed, O Israel, for behold, I am saving you from afar and your seed from the land of their captivity, and Jacob shall again be at peace and tranquil, and none will frighten him."**
> **(17) "For I will bring healing to you, and of your wounds I will heal you," says the Lord, "for they called you an outcast [saying], 'she is Zion for whom no one cares'."**

The (Gentile) nations acknowledge that ***Israel*** was the victim who bore the dire penalties which the iniquities of others have incurred. The Jewish people have been forced to carry ills and pains caused by the direct actions of the (Gentile) nations. They have borne the consequences of the (Gentile) nations' sickness, and have suffered (and continue to) suffer because of them. The (Gentile) nations have held that the Jewish people are cursed by God, and they were (and many still are) determined to see that they suffer the consequences of this alleged curse. Although it cannot be denied that some of ***Israel***'s suffering was due to its own transgressions of Torah, the (Gentile) nations, by "going overboard" with their misdeeds, inflicted most of the suffering on ***Israel***, and not God punishing ***Israel*** for its sins. God has, indeed, used the (Gentile) nations as a "rod" against ***Israel*** for its misdeeds, but He is not pleased with the way they have exceeded their "license" in this function (e.g., Zechariah 1:15).

✡ **Question:** **Does *Israel* (as God's servant) "fit" into Isaiah 53:4?**
✡ **Answer:** **YES!**

C. Interim Summary – Isaiah 52:13-53:4

Using a verse-by-verse analysis of the Hebrew text and a correct translation from the Hebrew, testing of the hypothesis formulated in Section III.B continued via the *Verification* stage of the *Scientific Method*.

A new "voice" appears in Isaiah 53:1 – the collective "voice" of the (Gentile) nations or, perhaps, the "voice" of a spokesperson for them or their leaders. Given this change in "speakers", and based on their contextual consistency with the teachings of the Hebrew Bible and the historical record, the current segment continues to confirm the validity of the hypothesis that ***Israel***, as God's servant, is the subject in the *Fourth Servant Song*. The cumulative results obtained thus far are summarized in Table IV.C-1.

Table IV.C-1 – Summary of results from Verification stage: Isaiah 52:13-53:4

Isaiah	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Who Is The "Speaker"?	Does Hypothesis "*Israel* = Servant" Fit?
52:13	Behold, My servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and he shall be very high.	God	YES
52:14	As many wondered about you, "How marred his appearance is from that of a man, and his features from that of people!"	God	YES
52:15	So shall he cause many nations to be startled; kings shall shut their mouths because of him, because that which had not been told to them they saw, and that which they had not heard they perceived.	God	YES
53:1	Who would have believed our report, and to whom was the arm of the Lord revealed?	The (Gentile) Nations	YES
53:2	And he came up like a sapling before it, and like a root out from dry ground; he had no features and no splendor; and we saw him that he had no appearance; and how could we desire him?	The (Gentile) Nations	YES
53:3	He was despised and forsaken by men; a man of pains, and accustomed to illness, and as one from whom we would hide our faces; he was despised, and we had no regard for him.	The (Gentile) Nations	YES
53:4	Indeed, he bore our illnesses and our pains – he has carried them, yet we had regarded him plagued, smitten by God, and oppressed.	The (Gentile) Nations	YES

V. Segment 3 – Isaiah 53:5-8

A. The Hebrew Text with Jewish and Christian Translations

Side-by-side English renditions and the Hebrew text of the next portion of the *Fourth Servant Song*, Isaiah 53:5-8, are displayed in Table V.A-1. The King James Version (KJV) translation is shown with pointers to cross-referenced passages in the New Testament. These references are taken from the New

American Standard Bible (NASB). However, the corresponding passages below the table are quoted from the KJV for consistency.

<u>Table V.A-1</u> – Isaiah 53:5-8

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:5	But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.(i)	But he was pained because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities; the chastisement of our welfare was upon him, and with his wounds we were healed.	וְהוּא מְחֹלָל מִפְּשָׁעֵנוּ מְדֻכָּא מֵעֲוֺנֹתֵינוּ מוּסַר שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ עָלָיו וּבַחֲבֻרָתוֹ נִרְפָּא-לָנוּ׃	נג,ה
53:6	All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.	We all went astray like sheep, we have turned, each one on his way, and the Lord inflicted upon him [<u>or</u>, accepted his prayers for] the iniquity of all of us.	כֻּלָּנוּ כַּצֹּאן תָּעִינוּ אִישׁ לְדַרְכּוֹ פָּנִינוּ וַיהוָה הִפְגִּיעַ בּוֹ אֵת עֲוֺן כֻּלָּנוּ׃	נג,ו
53:7	He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.(ii)	He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he would not open his mouth; like a lamb to the slaughter he would be brought, and like a ewe that is mute before her shearers, and he would not open his mouth.	נִגַּשׂ וְהוּא נַעֲנֶה וְלֹא יִפְתַּח-פִּיו כַּשֶּׂה יוּבָל וּכְרָחֵל לִפְנֵי גֹזְזֶיהָ נֶאֱלָמָה וְלֹא יִפְתַּח פִּיו׃	נג,ז
53:8	He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.	From imprisonment and from judgment he was taken, and his generation who shall tell? For he was cut off from the land of the living; because of the transgression of my people, a plague came upon them.	מֵעֹצֶר וּמִמִּשְׁפָּט לֻקָּח וְאֶת-דּוֹרוֹ מִי יְשׂוֹחֵחַ כִּי נִגְזַר מֵאֶרֶץ חַיִּים מִפֶּשַׁע עַמִּי נֶגַע לָמוֹ׃	נג,ח

(i) <u>Romans 4:25(KJV)</u> – Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

<u>1Corinthians 15:3(KJV)</u> – For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

<u>Hebrews 5:8(KJV)</u> – Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

<u>Hebrews 9:28(KJV)</u> – So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

<u>1Peter 2:24-25(KJV)</u> – (24) Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. (25) For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

(ii) Matthew 26:63(KJV) – But Jesus held his peace, And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

Matthew 27:12-14(KJV) – (12) And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. (13) Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? (14) And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marveled greatly.

Mark 14:61(KJV) – But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?

Mark 15:5(KJV) – But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marveled.

Luke 23:9(KJV) – Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.

John 19:9(KJV) – And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.

Acts 8:32-33(KJV) – (32) The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: (33) In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

B. Analysis of Isaiah 53:5-8

The *Verification* stage of the *Scientific Method* resumes with testing the hypothesis on the four verses in the current segment of the *Fourth Servant Song*, Isaiah 53:5-8. Evidence from the Hebrew Bible and from the historical record is used to check whether ***Israel*** = **servant** "fits" into the context.

The importance of knowing the identity of the "speakers" was pointed out at the start of the analysis. The opening segment of the *Fourth Servant Song*, Isaiah 52:13-15, was in the "voice" of God. As Chapter 53 opens, an abrupt change occurs in the "voice", and now the prophet conveys the words of the (Gentile) nations. In this segment, the (Gentile) nations are still "speaking" and, as they begin to recognize ***Israel***'s proper place and role in history, they confess their guilt and admit the unjust mistreatment ***Israel*** at their hands.

ISAIAH 53:5

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:5	But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.	But he was pained because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities; the chastisement of our welfare was upon him, and with his wounds we were healed.	וְהוּא מְחֹלָל מִפְּשָׁעֵנוּ מְדֻכָּא מֵעֲוֹנֹתֵינוּ מוּסַר שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ עָלָיו וּבַחֲבֻרָתוֹ נִרְפָּא-לָנוּ׃	נג,ה

There are several significant differences between the two translations, which are shown in highlighted form. First is the problem of the expressions **because of** (Jewish rendition) and **for** (KJV rendition), which are not interchangeable here [the corresponding Hebrew prepositions for the two cases are -מִ\-מֵ (***mei***-***mi***-); both are abbreviations of the preposition מִן (***min***), meaning **from**, **because**, **of**]. The Jewish rendition relates that the servant was hurt *due to* the sinful acts of the

(Gentile) nations, i.e., this was caused by the conduct of the (Gentile) nations against the servant, and the effect was his being hurt. The KJV rendition creates the perception that the servant *vicariously took on the sins* of the people, which caused him, and not them, to bear the consequences. In other words, the preposition "for" in the KJV implies that the servant took on the iniquities of the (Gentile) nations and, thereby, causing their sins to be expiated through his suffering. This idea contradicts what the Hebrew Bible teaches, according to which (human) vicarious atonement is strictly forbidden; each person is responsible for his or her own sins (e.g., Exodus 32:31-33; Numbers 35:33; Deuteronomy 24:16; 2 Kings 14:6; Jeremiah 31:29[30 in Christian Bibles]; Ezekiel 18:4,20; Psalms 49:7-8).

Second, in the closing phrase of the verse, a change in tenses occurs in the KJV relative to the Jewish translation. The KJV has "**... we are healed ...**", whereas the Jewish translation has "**... we were healed ...**". The application of the root verb, רפא (***RESH-FEI-Alef***), **[to] heal**, is common in the Hebrew Bible. However, the phrase נִרְפָּא־לָנוּ (***nirPA-LAnu***) is an idiomatic expression that occurs only once, at Isaiah 53:5. The first word in this phrase, נִרְפָּא (***nirPA***), is the 3rd-person, singular, masculine, past tense conjugation of the root verb in the *nif'AL* stem (the reflexive and passive of the simple stem, *QAL*, of the Hebrew verbs), giving it the meaning **[he/it] was healed**. The second word in the phrase is לָנוּ (***LAnu***), meaning **to/for us**. Thus, the *literal* translation of the phrase נִרְפָּא־לָנוּ is **[it] was healed for us**, referring to an illness, and from which is formed the idiomatic expression that means "we were healed".

Finally, the KJV and the Jewish translations differ on their respective renditions of a term that derives from the Hebrew compound noun חֲבוּרָה (***havuRAH***). The KJV renders it as **stripes** (singular, **a stripe**, meaning **a blow** or **a stroke** [as is imparted by a whip]), while the Jewish translation renders it as **wounds** (singular, **a wound**). Table V.B-1 shows the references to all seven applications of this term in the Hebrew Bible along with their respective correct translations and their translations in the KJV.

Table V.B-1 – Applications of חֲבוּרָה/חַבּוּרָה (*havuRAH/haburAH*) in the Hebrew Bible[9]

Hebrew Word	Transliteration	Reference	Correct Translation	KJV Rendition
לְחַבֻּרָתִי	***lehaburaTI***	Genesis 4:23	for giving me a bruise	to my hurt
חַבּוּרָה	***haburAH***	Exodus 21:25(2x)	a wound	wound
וְחַבּוּרָה	***vehaburAH***	Isaiah 1:6	and contusions	and bruises
חַבּוּרֹתָי	***haburoTAI***	Psalms 38:6	my wounds	my wounds
חַבּוּרוֹת	***haburOT***	Proverbs 20:30	contusions	the blueness of a wound

[9] This term appears in the Hebrew Bible in two forms with regard to its vowel punctuations, חֲבוּרָה (***havuRAH***) and חַבּוּרָה (***haburAH***), which have identical meanings.

וּבַחֲבֻרָתוֹ	***u'va'havuraTO***	**Isaiah 53:5**	**and with his wounds**	**and with his stripes**

The information indicates that the KJV rendition in Isaiah 53:5 not only differs from the correct translation, but also is inconsistent with its own renditions of this term in all but one of the other instances in which it appears in the Hebrew Bible (the KJV translation at Proverbs 20:30 is clearly in error since the Hebrew word חַבּוּרוֹת (***habuROT***) is the plural of חַבּוּרָה).

The meaning of this verse, with ***Israel*** as the servant, is consistent with the history of the Jewish people, and with their promised future, as was already shown in the previous segment. The (Gentile) nations realize that their own sickness (perhaps it is the sickness of *anti-Semitism*) became the vehicle for oppressing the Jewish people throughout the years. They brought suffering on the Jews for their own selfish purposes; it was not, as they had claimed, God punishing ***Israel*** for its own sinful behavior, such as the claim by some (Gentile) nations regarding ***Israel***'s rejection of Jesus. Whereas the (Gentile) nations had believed that ***Israel*** was experiencing divine retribution for her sins, they have come to the realization that the suffering of ***Israel*** was mostly due to the actions and sinfulness of her oppressors. This theme is further developed throughout the Hebrew Bible:

> **Jeremiah 10:25 – Pour out Your wrath upon the nations that do not know You and upon the families that have not called in Your name, for they have devoured Jacob and consumed him and destroyed him, and have wasted his dwelling.**
>
> **Jeremiah 50:7 – All who found them devoured them, and their adversaries said, "We are not to blame because they sinned against the Lord, the Abode of justice and the hope of their forefathers – the Lord."**

In the previous segment, it was demonstrated how ***Israel*** is often characterized in the Hebrew Bible as having been bruised and wounded by the (Gentile) nations. The healing they have experienced may be the end of this anti-Semitism once they will have experienced this magnificent revelation about ***Israel***.

An often asked question is: *How will **Israel**'s wounds heal the (Gentile) nations?* In other words, what is the process by which this healing is effected? This is a good question, the answer to which provides additional insight into the eventual redemption of ***Israel*** and its impact on the (Gentile) nations of the world.

As was noted above, the (Gentile) nations have believed, and many still do, that the wounding and suffering of the Jewish people was inflicted by God because they have been cursed. This is not true. The suffering that was due to Divine retribution is actually part of a "refining" process that will eventually bring about the redemption and higher glory. The wages of disobedience are described in excruciating detail in the "**Admonition**" [תּוֹכֵחָה (***tocheiHAH***) in Hebrew] in the Torah (Leviticus 26:14-43; also Deuteronomy 28:15-68) – the consequences that will befall those who transgress the commandments. This reproof, which has

resulted in wounds and suffering, will lead the people to repent and, as the conclusion of the “Admonition” states (Leviticus 26:40-43), repentance will bring restoration, it will put ***Israel*** back on the right path, at which time ***Israel*** will merit to be healed. This is similar to a parent disciplining a child for misdeeds, with the expectation that such behavior is corrected and not repeated in the future.

In the end, when ***Israel*** merits the arrival of the messianic era, the (Gentile) nations will also benefit – they will be healed of anti-Semitism, idolatry, and other abominations. In other words, ***Israel***’s suffering will eventually lead to the world’s redemption, from which the (Gentile) nations will also benefit.

✡ **Question:** **Does *Israel* (as God's servant) "fit" into Isaiah 53:5?**
✡ **Answer:** **YES!**

ISAIAH 53:6

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:6	All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.	We all went astray like sheep, we have turned, each one on his way, and the Lord inflicted upon him [*or*, accepted his prayers for] the iniquity of all of us.	כֻּלָּנוּ כַּצֹּאן תָּעִינוּ אִישׁ לְדַרְכּוֹ פָּנִינוּ וַיהוה הִפְגִּיעַ בּוֹ אֵת עֲוֹן כֻּלָּנוּ׃	נג,ו

The highlighted portion of the last phrase in this verse may be translated in two ways, as shown in the Jewish rendition. Although the common Jewish rendition is similar to the translation in the KJV, it does not convey the message of vicarious atonement that is being promoted in the KJV. When God punished ***Israel***, He often used (Gentile) nations as His "rod of discipline":

> **Isaiah 10:5 – Woe that Assyria is the rod of My wrath, and My fury is a staff in their hand[s].**
>
> **Habakkuk 1:12 – Are You not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O Lord, You have ordained them [the Chaldeans] for judgment, and, O Mighty God, You have established them for correction.**

The (Gentile) nations were used by God to punish ***Israel***, but they went beyond their specific mission, thereby causing ***Israel*** to suffer more than was intended.

The alternate translation, in which the phrase "**… inflicted upon him …**" is replaced with the phrase "**… accepted his prayers for …**", is also plausible in terms of the parameters of the Hebrew language. The verb used here, הִפְגִּיעַ (***hifGI'a***), is the 3rd-person, singular, masculine, past tense conjugation of the root verb פגע (***PEH-GIMEL-AYIN***) in the ***hif'IL*** stem (the active causative form of the Hebrew verb). This verb has common Biblical applications in the context of **[to] hit**, **[to] hurt**, **[to] inflict**, **[to] insult**, and less common applications in the context of **[to] bid**, **[to] pray**, **[to] request**, **[to intercede]**, **[to] supplicate** (e.g., Genesis 23:8, Isaiah 53:12, 59:16, Jeremiah 7:16, 27:18, Job 21:15, Ruth 1:16). Therefore, according to this meaning of the verb הִפְגִּיעַ, the (Gentile) nations, like stray

sheep, left the path of their designated mission to do whatever they wanted and, through it all, the Jewish people prayed and interceded on their behalf. An example of this is found in Jeremiah's letter to the Jewish exiles in Babylon, wherein he conveys to them God's message to pray for the peace of the cities in which they dwell:

> **Jeremiah 29:7 – And seek the peace of the city where I have exiled you and pray for it to the Lord, for in its peace you shall have peace.**

Either one of the Jewish interpretations is consistent with the teachings of the Hebrew Bible with ***Israel*** as the servant.

✡ **Question: Does *Israel* (as God's servant) "fit" into Isaiah 53:6?**
✡ **Answer: YES!**

ISAIAH 53:7

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:7	He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.	He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he would not open his mouth; like a lamb to the slaughter he would be brought, and like a ewe that is mute before her shearers, and he would not open his mouth.	נִגַּשׂ וְהוּא נַעֲנֶה וְלֹא יִפְתַּח־פִּיו כַּשֶּׂה יוּבָל וּכְרָחֵל לִפְנֵי גֹזְזֶיהָ נֶאֱלָמָה וְלֹא יִפְתַּח פִּיו:	נג,ז

The two translations are reasonably similar and do not require further analysis.

Regarding the context, the remnant of ***Israel*** has been massacred like sheep being slaughtered, a symbolism that is common in the Hebrew Bible:

> **Zechariah 11:4-7 – (4) So said the Lord, my God: "Tend the flock of slaughter, (5) whose buyers shall slay them and not be guilty; and whose sellers shall say, 'Blessed be the Lord, for I have become wealthy'; and whose shepherds shall not have pity on them. (6) For I will no longer have pity on the inhabitants of the land," says the Lord. "And behold! I will deliver the men, each one into his neighbor's hand and into his king's hand. And they shall crush the land, and I will not save [them] from their hand[s]. (7) And I tended the flock of slaughter; indeed, the poor of the flock. And I took for Myself two staffs; one I called Pleasantness, and one I called Destroyers; and I tended the flock."**
>
> **Psalms 44:12,23 – (12) You deliver us as sheep to be eaten, and You scatter us among the nations.**
> **(23) For it is for Your sake that we are killed all the time, [that] we are considered as sheep for the slaughter.**

Psalms 44 vividly portrays the recurring oppression and persecution of the Jewish people in exile, with ***Israel*** pleading for strength to endure until their redemption.

The fact that the Jewish people have suffered through the sins of the (Gentile) nations is hardly disputable. Yet, in spite of all the troubles that befell the Jewish

people throughout their history, there always existed a righteous remnant who never blamed God for their troubles. As far as their relationship with God was concerned, they voiced no resentment and, though led to their deaths, they remained meek as sheep. Is it not interesting that the Jews were both shorn and slaughtered in the Nazi death camps? And when they were led on their death marches to the gas chambers or to the front of mass grave pits to be shot, all they had on their lips is the *Sh'ma* (Deuteronomy 6:4).

✡ **Question:** **Does *Israel* (as God's servant) "fit" into Isaiah 53:7?**
✡ **Answer:** **YES!**

ISAIAH 53:8

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:8	He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.	From imprisonment and from judgment he was taken, and his generation who shall tell? For he was cut off from the land of the living; because of the transgression of my people, a plague came upon them.	מֵעֹצֶר וּמִמִּשְׁפָּט לֻקָּח וְאֶת־דּוֹרוֹ מִי יְשׂוֹחֵחַ כִּי נִגְזַר מֵאֶרֶץ חַיִּים מִפֶּשַׁע עַמִּי נֶגַע לָמוֹ׃	נג,ח

The two renditions are reasonably similar, except for two mistranslations. The first problem is the case of the expressions **because of** (Jewish rendition) and **for** (KJV rendition), which are not interchangeable here, and which was encountered and resolved in v. 5 above. The second problem is in the last phrase, where the difference in the respective translations of the Hebrew word לָמוֹ (***la**MO*) has a significant impact on the context of the verse. The Jewish version renders the word as **upon them**, while the KJV renders it as **he**. In the Jewish rendition, the context points to a nation that was stricken. In the KJV translation, the context points to an individual who was afflicted. Since both versions cannot be valid simultaneously, it is important to determine which one of them is correct.

A closer look at the word לָמוֹ helps resolve this issue. A good Hebrew-Hebrew dictionary will identify the word לָמוֹ as a synonym for the Hebrew pronoun לָהֶם (***la**HEM*), meaning, **them(selves)**, **for/from them(selves)**, **to/unto them(selves)**, **they [have]** (particularly in Biblical Hebrew).

Figure V.B-1 shows the scanned portion of a page from a Hebrew-Hebrew dictionary,[10] which verifies that לָמוֹ and לָהֶם [highlighted] are synonyms.

[10] The Hebrew-Hebrew dictionary, *MeAleph ad Tav – Milon Ivri Shimushi [From Aleph to Tav – A Practical Hebrew Dictionary]*, by Meir M^e^dan, p. 286, Achiasaf Publishing House, Ltd., Jerusalem (1954; Special Edition for readers of the Ma'ariv Daily).

<u>Figure V.B-1</u> – The equivalence of לָמוֹ and לָהֶם in a Hebrew-Hebrew dictionary

לָמָה 286 לָעוּז

לָמָה*, נ׳, מִין גָּמָל קָטָן חֲסַר דַּבֶּשֶׁת (Auchenia lama);—כִּנּוּי שֶׁל דַּת בּוּדְהָא בְּטִיבֶּט.
לָמוֹ, מ״ג, לָהֶם.
לָמוֹ, מ״י, לְ־.
לָמוּד, ת׳, מֻרְגָּל, מְנֻסֶּה.
לִמּוּד, ד׳, הוֹרָאָה, הַקְנָיַת יְדִיעוֹת; רְכִישַׁת

לְמַפְרֵעַ, תה״פ, לְאָחוֹר, לְשֶׁעָבַר, עַל מַה שֶּׁהָיָה לְקֹדֶם לָכֵן; מִן הַסּוֹף אֶל הַהַתְחָלָה.
לְמַרוֹת, מ״י, עַל אַף־, בְּנִגּוּד לְ־, אַף־עַל־פִּי שֶׁ־.
לְמִשְׁעִי, תה״פ, בִּנְקִיּוּת, בְּאֹפֶן חָלָק.
לָן, ראה לון.
לָנוּ, מִלַּת־הַיַּחַס לְ־ עִם כִּנּוּי לַמְדַבְּרִים

Likewise, a good Hebrew-English dictionary will provide the correct English translation of the word לָמוֹ.

Figure V.B-2 shows the scanned portion of a page from a <u>Hebrew-English</u> dictionary,[11] which also verifies that לָמוֹ and לָהֶם [highlighted] are synonyms, and that the English translation of לָמוֹ is **[poetic] them**, **to them**.

<u>Figure V.B-2</u> – The equivalence of לָמוֹ and לָהֶם in a Hebrew-English dictionary

1132 למד – למו״ט 1131

לִמֵּד חוֹבָה (קַטֵּגוֹרְיָה) עַל	to judge unfavourably, to accuse, indict, arraign
מְלַמֵּד שֶׁ־	from this one may deduce that
לְלַמֵּד שֶׁ־, לְלַמֶּדְךָ שֶׁ־	in order to explain to you that
לֻמַּד	to be trained, taught, schooled
מִצְוַת אֲנָשִׁים מְלֻמָּדָה ר׳ מִצְוָה	
הִתְלַמֵּד	to learn by oneself, teach, train oneself, practise, be used
לֶמֶד, ז. [לִמְדוֹ]	(poet.) study, knowledge
לָמֵד, ת. [לְמֵדָה, לְמֵדִים, לְמֵדוֹת]	(to be) learned; learning, accustomed, taught; to argue, argumentative
וְלֹא הַבַּיְשָׁן לָמֵד וְלֹא הַקַּפְּדָן מְלַמֵּד (אבות ב, ה)	the shamefast man cannot learn and the impatient
²לָמָה, נ.	naught, vanity, nonentity, nothingness
שֶׁהָיָה לְלָמָה וְלֹא כְלוּם	who was reduced to nought and nothing
אַתֶּם לָמָה וְדִבְרֵיכֶם לָמָה!	you are nought and your words are nought
³לָמָה, נ. [לָמוֹת]	llama
⁴לָמָה, ז.	lama (Tibet)
°דָּלַי לָמָה	Dalai Lama
למה״ד – לְמָה הַדָּבָר דּוֹמֶה?	To what can this be likened (compared)?
לָמוֹ, מ״ג = לָהֶם	(poet.) them, to them
לָמוֹ, מ״י	(poet.) to
לָמוּד, ת. [לְמוּדָה, לְמוּדִים, לְמוּדוֹת]	trained, accustomed, experienced, used to, taught

These two sources provide the correct meaning and translation of the word לָמוֹ.

A word study on לָמוֹ also confirms that it is synonymous with לָהֶם in the manner it is used in the Hebrew Bible. Table V.B-2 shows all 55 instance of the word לָמוֹ in the Hebrew Bible.

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[11] *<u>The Complete Hebrew-English Dictionary</u>*, by R. Alcalay, p. 1132, Chemed Books, Jerusalem (1990)

Table V.B-2 – Identified instances of לָמוֹ in the Hebrew Bible

Hebrew	Book	#	References
לָמוֹ	Genesis	2	9:26,27
	Deuteronomy	4	32:32,35; 33:2(2x)
	Isaiah	11	16:4; 23:1; 26:14,16; 30:5; 35:8; 43:8; 44:7,15; 48:21; **53:8**
	Habakkuk	1	2:7
	Psalms	22	2:4; 28:8; 44:4[3]*,11[10]; 49:14[13]; 55:20[19]; 56:8[7]; 58:5[4],8[7]; 59:9[8]; 64:6[5](2x); 66:7; 73:6,10,18; 78:24,66; 80:7[6]; 88:9[8]; 99:7; 119:165
	Proverbs	1	23:20
	Job	10	3:13[14]; 6:19; 14:21; 15:28; 22:17,19; 24:16,17; 30:13; 39:4
	Lamentations	4	1:19,22; 4:10,15

* Numbers in brackets, e.g., Psalms 44:4[3], identify respective verses in Christian Bibles

The study of the Hebrew term לָמוֹ now focuses on the 11 instances of the term in the Book of Isaiah, which comprise 20% of the total – a fair sample drawn entirely from within the Book of Isaiah. Listed in Table V.B-3 are the biblical citations for each case along with a correct translation and the KJV translation of the phrase that contains the term לָמוֹ. The respective renditions of לָמוֹ are highlighted in each translation.

Table V.B-3 – Identified instances of לָמוֹ in the Book of Isaiah

Passage In Isaiah	Correct Translation	KJV Translation
16:4	…Become a hiding place for them…	…be thou a covert to them…
23:1	…he appeared to them.	…it is revealed to them.
26:14	…have put an end to any memory of them.	…and made all their memory to perish.
26:16	…when Your chastening is upon them.	…when thy chastening was upon them.
30:5	…a people that will not be of benefit to them…	…a people that could not profit them…
35:8	…and it shall be for them…	…but it shall be for those…
43:8	…and deaf ones who have ears.	…and the deaf that have ears.
44:7	…let them tell for themselves.	…let them shew unto them.
44:15	…they made graven images and bowed to them.	…he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto.
48:21	He made water run from a rock for them…	…he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them…
53:8	**…because of the transgression of my people, a plague came upon them.**	**…for the transgression of my people was he stricken.**

In all but two cases, the KJV translations of לָמוֹ are in the plural and close to the correct respective context. The two exceptions are at Isaiah 44:15 & 53:8.

The KJV rendition of Isaiah 44:15 is problematic for the following reason. The verse in question is part of a passage wherein Isaiah decries the futility of idols and derides the foolish zeal of idolaters (Isaiah 44:9-20). In the Hebrew text, the prophet switches between the plural and the singular as he refers to those who fashion the idols and to the idols themselves. Clearly, the context here is in the plural for both – Isaiah is speaking of people who make and worship idols, and not to a singular individual who makes a single idol. [The usage of compound

nouns is common in the Hebrew Bible.[12] The plural application of the compound noun פֶּסֶל (***PE**sel*), **idol**, in Isaiah 44:15 is such an example (Psalms 97:7 is also an example of an application of a compound noun, and where the KJV has the correct translation for it!).] Even though cast in the singular form, the Hebrew text of the passage Isaiah 44:13-17 conveys, without ambiguity, the notion that the prophet is speaking of wooden idols as one kind of useless gods, how they are made and then worshipped. This is evident from the fact that the passages that immediately precede and follow it are cast in the plural. Therefore, the correct translation is in the plural. It is interesting to note that even the Christian *LXX* has this verse rendered in the plural:

> **Isaiah 44:15(LXX) – That it might be for men to burn: and having taken part of it he warms himself; and they burn part of it; and bake loaves thereon; and the rest they make for themselves gods, and they worship them.**

The KJV rendition provides a contextually incorrect translation for this passage and, therefore, the reader may be misled to think that this particular application of לָמוֹ is in the singular and not in the plural. Since Isaiah applied the word לָמוֹ on 11 occasions throughout his Book, why would he use it in a different way here, in Isaiah 53:8, where it might create an ambiguity? Surely he would not want to be ambiguous when it comes to berating idolatry!

Without the support from the incorrect KJV rendition of לָמוֹ in Isaiah 44:15, the rendition by the KJV of לָמוֹ in Isaiah 53:8 stands out as a peculiar exception, one that promotes a Christian theological concept, and this is addressed in the essay that deals with the Christian perspective.[13] Thus, according to authoritative sources on the Hebrew language, and as demonstrated from the applications in the Hebrew Bible, the Jewish rendition of לָמוֹ, as **upon them**, is the correct one.

An additional interesting Hebrew linguistic nuance supports לָמוֹ as being plural and not singular. There is a poetic suffix, ־מוֹ, (-***mo***), commonly used in the Hebrew Bible in place of the more common suffix ־הֶם, (***-hem***), which usually ends verbs and nouns conjugated in the 3rd-person, plural, masculine gender.[14] These instances occur primarily in passages that have a poetic structure. Consider, for example, Moses' *Song of the Sea* (Exodus 15:1-19), which contains the following examples:

- Verse 7 - יֹאכְלֵמוֹ (***yochLEImo***), **[it] devours them**
- Verse 9 - תִּמְלָאֵמוֹ (***timla'EImo***), **[it] shall be filled from them**,
  תּוֹרִישֵׁמוֹ (***toriSHEImo***), **[it] shall impoverish them**
- Verse 10 - כִּסָּמוֹ (***kiSAmo***), **[it] covered them**
- Verse 12 - תִּבְלָעֵמוֹ (***tivla'EImo***), **[it] swallowed them**

[12] Some examples of compound nouns in the English language are: chicken, hair, sheep.
[13] See Footnote 4
[14] There are also similar poetic suffix substitutions that apply to other pronouns, but these are not relevant to the present discussion.

- Verse 15 - יֹאחֲזֵמוֹ (*yo<u>h</u>azEImo*), **[it] seized them**
- Verse 17 - תְּבִאֵמוֹ וְתִטָּעֵמוֹ (*t^e^vi'EImo v^e^tita'<u>EI</u>mo*), **shall bring them and plant them**

There are additional examples in the *<u>Farewell Song of Moses</u>* (Deuteronomy 32:1-43), and scores of other instances in the Book of Psalms and in the Book of Job. The salient point concerning the suffix מוֹ- is that it also applies to the common term לָהֶם, which is the form of the preposition -לְ (***l*^e^-**), **to**, in the 3rd-person, plural, masculine gender, i.e., a combination of -לְ and the suffix הֶם-. By replacing the הֶם- with the מוֹ-, the (poetic) synonym לָמוֹ is obtained. This demonstrates that לָמוֹ is a collective term which must point to a plural entity and not to an individual. In the case of Isaiah 53:8, it clearly points to people bowing to idols and not to any specific person bowing to a specific idol.

Now that the grammatical issue has been resolved, and the Jewish translation proves to be the correct one, the meaning of this verse can be explained. As noted earlier, a change in attitude by the (Gentile) nations takes place in Isaiah 53:4-7, as a new realization of ***Israel***'s grandeur was settling in their minds. In Isaiah 53:8, [עַמִּי (***<u>a</u>MI***), **my people**] iniquities inflicted the suffering on ***Israel***. When ***Israel***'s exile finally ends, the leaders of the (Gentile) nations will marvel at a people who survived the expulsion(s) from **the land of the living** [אֶרֶץ חַיִּים (***Eretz ha'<u>h</u>aYIM***); an expression often used in the Hebrew Bible for the **Land of Israel** {e.g., Ezekiel 26:20, 32:23,24,25,26,27,32}], along with all the unfair and unjust treatment throughout their time in exile.

Has this been the experience of ***Israel*** during its times in exile? The "thumbnail sketch" of scenes out of Jewish history (Section IV.B) contains the answer.

✡ **<u>Question</u>:** **Does *Israel* (as God's servant) "fit" into Isaiah 53:8?**
✡ **<u>Answer</u>:** **YES!**

C. Interim Summary – Isaiah 52:13-53:1-8

Using a verse-by-verse analysis of the Hebrew text and with the help of a correct translation from the Hebrew, testing of the hypothesis formulated in Section III.B continued as part of the *Verification* stage of the *Scientific Method*.

The voice of the (Gentile) nations, the new "voice" that appeared in Isaiah 53:1, continued to speak in the current passage. Based on its consistency with the teachings of the Hebrew Bible and the historical record, the present segment continues to confirm the validity of the hypothesis that ***Israel***, as God's servant, is the subject in the *Fourth Servant Song*.

The results obtained thus far are summarized in Table V.C-1.

Table V.C-1 – **Summary of results from Verification stage: Isaiah 52:13-53:8**

Isaiah	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Who Is The "Speaker"?	Does Hypothesis "*Israel* = Servant" Fit?
52:13	Behold, My servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and he shall be very high.	God	YES
52:14	As many wondered about you, "How marred his appearance is from that of a man, and his features from that of people!"	God	YES
52:15	So shall he cause many nations to be startled; kings shall shut their mouths because of him, because that which had not been told to them they saw, and that which they had not heard they perceived.	God	YES
53:1	Who would have believed our report, and to whom was the arm of the Lord revealed?	The (Gentile) Nations	YES
53:2	And he came up like a sapling before it, and like a root out from dry ground; he had no features and no splendor; and we saw him that he had no appearance; and how could we desire him?	The (Gentile) Nations	YES
53:3	He was despised and forsaken by men; a man of pains, and accustomed to illness, and as one from whom we would hide our faces; he was despised, and we had no regard for him.	The (Gentile) Nations	YES
53:4	Indeed, he bore our illnesses, and our pains – he has carried them, yet we had regarded him plagued, smitten by God, and oppressed.	The (Gentile) Nations	YES
53:5	But he was pained because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities; the chastisement of our welfare was upon him, and with his wounds we were healed.	The (Gentile) Nations	YES
53:6	We all went astray like sheep, we have turned, each one on his way, and the Lord inflicted upon him [or, accepted his prayers for] the iniquity of all of us.	The (Gentile) Nations	YES
53:7	He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he would not open his mouth; like a lamb to the slaughter he would be brought, and like a ewe that is mute before her shearers, and he would not open his mouth.	The (Gentile) Nations	YES
53:8	From imprisonment and from judgment he was taken, and his generation who shall tell? For he was cut off from the land of the living; because of the transgression of my people, a plague came upon them.	The (Gentile) Nations	YES

VI. Segment 4 – Isaiah 53:9-12

A. The Hebrew Text with Jewish and Christian Translations

Side-by-side English renditions and the Hebrew text of the final portion of the *Fourth Servant Song*, Isaiah 53:9-12, are displayed in Table VI.A-1. . The King James Version (KJV) translation is shown with pointers to cross-referenced

passages in the New Testament. These references are taken from the New American Standard Bible (NASB). However, the corresponding passages below the table are quoted from the KJV for consistency.

<u>Table VI.A-1</u> – Isaiah 53:9-12

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:9	And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.(i)	And he gave his grave to the wicked, and to the wealthy in his deaths, because he committed no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.	וַיִּתֵּן אֶת־רְשָׁעִים קִבְרוֹ וְאֶת־עָשִׁיר בְּמֹתָיו עַל לֹא־חָמָס עָשָׂה וְלֹא מִרְמָה בְּפִיו׃	נג,ט
53:10	Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.(ii)	And the Lord wished to crush him, He made him ill; if his soul would acknowledge guilt, he shall have descendants [*or*, he shall see progeny], he shall prolong his days, and God's purpose shall prosper in his hand.	וַיהוה חָפֵץ דַּכְּאוֹ הֶחֱלִי אִם־תָּשִׂים אָשָׁם נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְאֶה זֶרַע יַאֲרִיךְ יָמִים וְחֵפֶץ יהוה בְּיָדוֹ יִצְלָח׃	נג,י
53:11	He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.(iii)	From the toil of his soul he shall see [and he shall] be satisfied; with his knowledge My servant will vindicate the righteous before the multitudes, and their iniquities he shall carry.	מֵעֲמַל נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְאֶה יִשְׂבָּע בְּדַעְתּוֹ יַצְדִּיק צַדִּיק עַבְדִּי לָרַבִּים וַעֲוֹנֹתָם הוּא יִסְבֹּל׃	נג,יא
53:12	Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.(iv)	Therefore, I will allot him a portion among the multitudes, and with the mighty he shall share booty, because he has bared his soul to death, and with transgressors he was counted; and he bore the sin of many, and he will [continue to] intercede for the transgressors.	לָכֵן אֲחַלֶּק־לוֹ בָרַבִּים וְאֶת־עֲצוּמִים יְחַלֵּק שָׁלָל תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱרָה לַמָּוֶת נַפְשׁוֹ וְאֶת־פֹּשְׁעִים נִמְנָה וְהוּא חֵטְא רַבִּים נָשָׂא וְלַפֹּשְׁעִים יַפְגִּיעַ׃	נג,יב

(i) <u>Matthew 27:57-60(KJV)</u> – (57) When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: (58) He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. (59) And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, (60) And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.

<u>1Peter 2:22(KJV)</u> - Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

(ii) <u>John 1:29(KJV)</u> - The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

(iii) John 10:14-18(KJV) – (14) I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. (15) As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. (16) And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. (17) Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. (18) No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

Romans 5:18-19(KJV) – (18) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. (19) For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

(iv) Matthew 26:38-39,42(KJV) – (38) Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. (39) And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.
(42) He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

Mark 15:28(KJV) - And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.

Luke 22:37(KJV) - For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.

2Corinthians 5:21(KJV) - For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Philippians 2:9-11(KJV) – (9) Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: (10) That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; (11) And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

B. Analysis of Isaiah 53:9-12

The *Verification* stage of the *Scientific Method* resumes with testing the hypothesis on the four verses in the final segment of the *Fourth Servant Song*, Isaiah 53:9-12. Evidence from the Hebrew Bible and from the historical record is used to check whether **Israel** = ***servant*** "fits" into the context.

The importance of knowing the identity of the "speakers" was pointed out at the start of the analysis. The opening segment of the *Fourth Servant Song*, Isaiah 52:13-15, was in the "voice" of God. In Isaiah 53:1-8, the prophet conveys the words of the (Gentile) nations. A difference of opinions exists among the Jewish Sages concerning the "voice" at the start of the final segment, at Isaiah 53:9. Some hold that Isaiah 53:9 is a continuation of the confession by the (Gentile) nations who, in the previous verse, have realized that ***Israel*** suffered because of them, and then the "voice" changes at Isaiah 53:10. Others say that the "voice" has switched to that of the narrator, Isaiah, who summarizes the impact that the (Gentile) nations' iniquities had on ***Israel***, and then the "voice" changes at Isaiah

53:10. Still others maintain that it is the "voice" of God as He starts to respond to the (Gentile) nations with a description of what happened to ***Israel*** because of their [the (Gentile) nations'] sins. The latter is the one that will be followed here. This "voice", conveying God's response, continues to the end of the *Fourth Servant Song*. [Note: It does not matter which opinion is followed here, since any particular choice will not impact the overall interpretation of "Isaiah 53".]

ISAIAH 53:9

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:9	And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.	And he gave his grave to the wicked, and to the wealthy in his deaths, because he committed no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.	וַיִּתֵּן אֶת־רְשָׁעִים קִבְרוֹ וְאֶת־עָשִׁיר בְּמֹתָיו עַל לֹא־חָמָס עָשָׂה וְלֹא מִרְמָה בְּפִיו׃	נג,ט

A significant discrepancy exists between the Jewish and KJV translations of the Hebrew term בְּמֹתָיו (***b***^{e}***motav***). The Jewish rendition of the term, **in his deaths**, indicates an inherent plurality, while the KJV rendition, **in his death**, is in the singular form, and appears to be designed to support a Christological message.

To help determine which of these two renditions is correct, a linguistic analysis of this term is required. The term בְּמֹתָיו is a compound expression, a combination of a preposition and a (conjugated) noun. The preposition, בְּ־ (***b***^{e}***-***), is used in multiple applications in the Hebrew Bible, generally having any of the meanings, **in**, **with**, or **at**. The noun, מֹתָיו (***motav***), is the inflection in the possessive 3rd-person, singular, masculine gender, of the plural noun מוֹתִים (***motim***; the plural of the root noun מָוֶת (***mavet***), **death**),[15] and translates as **his deaths**. This term appears only once in the entire Hebrew Bible, and only one other related term is found in the Hebrew Bible in the plural form and in a compound expression, מוֹתֵי עֲרֵלִים (***motei areilim***), at Ezekiel 28:10, where the term מוֹתֵי (***motei***), is the possessive form of the plural, מוֹתִים, meaning, **deaths of ….** This phrase is correctly translated in the KJV as **the deaths of the uncircumcised**. Another word for **deaths** in the Hebrew Bible is מְמוֹתִים (***m***^{e}***motim***), which also derives from the same root noun מָוֶת. This term occurs twice, though only in the possessive plural form, מְמוֹתֵי (***m***^{e}***motei***), **deaths of…**, at Jeremiah 16:4 in the expression מְמוֹתֵי תַחֲלֻאִים (***m***^{e}***motei tahalu'im***), **deaths from/of diseases**,

[15] The "***-av***" suffix is the typical ending of a conjugation of a Hebrew plural noun in the 3rd-person, masculine, singular mode.

and at Ezekiel 28:8 in the expression מְמוֹתֵי חָלָל (*m^e^moTEI <u>h</u>aLAL)*, **deaths of the slain.**[16] Table VI.B-1 shows the relevant terminology for the noun מָוֶת.

<u>Table VI.B-1</u> – Study of מָוֶת as found the Hebrew Bible

Hebrew Term	Transliteration	Biblical Examples	Correct Translation	KJV Rendition
מָוֶת	***MAVet***	Isaiah 38:18	death	death
מוֹת־	***MOT-***	2Chronicles 22:4	death of [his father]	death of [his father]
מוֹתוֹ	***moTO***	Judges 13:7	[day of] his death	[day of] his death
בְּמוֹתוֹ	***b^e^moTO***	**Proverbs 14:32**	**in his death**	**in his death**
מוֹתִים	***moTIM***	[not available]	deaths; plural of מָוֶת	[not available]
מוֹתֵי	***moTEI-***	Ezekiel 28:10	deaths of [the uncircumcised]	deaths of [the uncircumcised]
בְּמֹתָיו	***b^e^moTAV***	**Isaiah 53:9**	**in his deaths**	**in his death**
מְמוֹתִים	***m^e^moTIM***	[not available]	deaths, plural of מָמוֹת	[not available]
מְמוֹתֵי	***m^e^moTEI-***	Jeremiah 16:4	[They shall die] deaths from/of [diseases]	[They shall die] of grievous deaths
		Ezekiel 28:8	[and you will die the] deaths of [the slain]	[and thou shalt die the] deaths of [them that are slain]

The information in the table indicates that the Hebrew term for **in his death** (the singular form) is בְּמוֹתוֹ (***b^e^moTO***). Clearly, the terms בְּמוֹתוֹ and בְּמֹתָיו are different Hebrew words, the latter being the term that appears in Isaiah 53:9. Thus, the Jewish translation of בְּמֹתָיו as **in his deaths** is the correct one.

An interesting interpretational "twist" is attributed to the prominent 12th century C.E. Sage Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra who, in a complex analysis, considered the term בְּמֹתָיו as a variant of the term בָּמֹתָיו (***bamoTAV***), which literally means **his high places**. Ibn Ezra interpreted "a high place" as **a mound**, using it as a metaphor for a tomb. The term בָּמֹתָיו appears three times in the Hebrew Bible - at 2Kings 18:22, Isaiah 36:7, and 2Chronicles 32:12 - all in reference to Hezekiah's removal and destruction of the illicit sacrificial altars that were constructed in places outside of the Temple grounds. There are no other cases in the Hebrew Bible where any form of the root noun בָּמָה (***baMAH***), **a high place**, is used to describe a tomb or grave, which leaves Ibn Ezra's interpretation as rather unusual, though some Jewish and Christian translators have adopted it.

With both בְּמֹתָיו and לָמוֹ being plural terms, and noting how both verses, Isaiah 53:8 and Isaiah 53:9, interchangeably refer to the same entity in the singular (collective noun) and in the plural, it follows that <u>the servant cannot be an</u>

[16] The noun חָלָל (***<u>h</u>aLAL***) is used as a compound noun in the Hebrew Bible, i.e., it is applied in this form either as a singular noun or as a plural noun (e.g., 2Sam 23:8,18), while its plural form, חֲלָלִים (***<u>h</u>alaLIM***), is also used in the Hebrew Bible.

individual. Therefore, it must be a compound entity, a plurality, which is entirely consistent with ***Israel*** as this entity.

The historical record testifies that many Jews chose to die like common criminals rather than renounce their faith; and many wealthy Jews were wantonly slain, not because of any crimes or violent acts they committed, but for no reason other than to enable their killers to rob them of their possessions. These words are reflected in scenes shown in photographs displayed at the National Holocaust Museum and in motion pictures such as *Schindler's List*, where Jews are shown to be kneeling before a trench while Nazis were aiming their weapons at them. In most cases, the Jews did not even put up any resistance to being murdered. Most died with the ***Sh'ma*** on their lips, and not with any form of deceit on them to accept doctrines and beliefs about gods that their Jewish forefathers had not known.

✡ **Question:** **Does *Israel* (as God's servant) "fit" into Isaiah 53:9?**
✡ **Answer:** **YES!**

ISAIAH 53:10

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:10	Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.	And the Lord wished to crush him, He made him ill; if his soul would acknowledge guilt, he shall have descendants [*or*, he shall see progeny], he shall prolong his days, and God's purpose shall prosper in his hand.	וַיהוה חָפֵץ דַּכְּאוֹ הֶחֱלִי אִם־תָּשִׂים אָשָׁם נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְאֶה זֶרַע יַאֲרִיךְ יָמִים וְחֵפֶץ יהוה בְּיָדוֹ יִצְלָח׃	נג,י

Significant differences exist between the two translations and their respective interpretations.

It is helpful in the analysis of this verse to note that the portion of the verse that follows the initial declaration about God punishing ***Israel*** is constructed as a *conditional statement*, namely, **IF (A) THEN (B)**. In other words, **if Condition A is satisfied**, **then Outcome B will occur**.

The respective translations of the Hebrew phrase, "אִם־תָּשִׂים אָשָׁם נַפְשׁוֹ" (***IM-tasIM asHAM nafsHO***), which is the statement of **Condition A**, are the source of the first significant discrepancy. The Jewish translation has "**if his soul would acknowledge guilt**", whereas the KJV has "**when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin**". The KJV translation casts the phrase in such a way as to continue with its message of a vicarious atonement by the servant – a concept that is contrary to what the Hebrew Bible teaches, wherein it is strictly forbidden. The problem stems from the fact that the Hebrew term אָשָׁם (***asHAM***) is rendered in the KJV as **an offering for sin**. Yet, when the term אָשָׁם is used in the Hebrew Bible, it

serves in two distinct applications: (1) אָשָׁם is used to refer to **a guilt offering**, not a sin offering, brought by a sinner for the atonement of any one of a number of specific sins committed with intent (e.g., Leviticus 5:15; Numbers 6:12), and (2) אָשָׁם is used to refer to **a sin or an iniquity committed with intent** (e.g., Jeremiah 51:5; Proverbs 14:9). In the correct context of the Hebrew phrase, and without violating what the Hebrew Bible teaches, it is impossible for someone to bring himself or herself as a guilt offering.

The structure of a verse in the form of a *conditional statement*, as is the case with Isaiah 53:10, is not an anomaly in the Hebrew Bible, as illustrated by the following examples (which are color-coded to emphasize their structure):

> **Genesis 18:26 - And the Lord said, "IF I find in Sodom fifty righteous men within the city, THEN I will forgive the entire place for their sake."**
>
> **Jeremiah 18:8 - IF that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turns from its evil, THEN I will relent of the evil that I intended to do to them.**

Clearly, the context of Isaiah 53:10 is that there is a reward being promised to ***Israel*** if the people admits their guilt and repent. *Of what use would a reward be to the servant if he were to submit himself to be sacrificed? What is this reward?* This reward, symbolized as **Outcome B**, is described in the remainder of the verse.

Two additional significant differences between the Christian and Jewish views concern the respective interpretations of the reward to the servant. The first component of the servant's reward is that "**... he shall have descendants [*or*, see progeny] ...**" according to the Jewish rendition, or that "**... he shall see his seed ...**" according to the KJV. On the surface, the two renditions appear to be similar. The major difference between them stems from the way in which the Hebrew term זֶרַע (***zEra***), **seed**, is interpreted. According to the Christian perspective, the servant's **seed** refers to his **figurative children**, i.e., his **spiritual children**, his **followers**. According to the Jewish understanding, **seed**, as it is used in the Hebrew Bible, refers exclusively to the servant's **biological offspring**, i.e., his **physical descendants**, his **progeny**. Clearly, the two views cannot both be correct.

The Hebrew word זֶרַע is yet another example of a compound noun, i.e., a noun that can be used in both a singular and plural context. The noun זֶרַע is used in the Hebrew Bible 230 times (229 times in Hebrew, 1 time in Aramaic) in several different applications, as summarized in Table VI.B-2.

Table VI.B-2 – The noun זֶרַע in the Hebrew Bible (with emphasis on Isaiah)

Hebrew Term	Meaning	#	Biblical Examples (all 25 cases in Isaiah included)	Remarks
זֶרַע	Part of a plant's fruit from which a new plant will grow	27	Isaiah 5:10, 55:10	
	Sowing season	2	Genesis 8:22; Leviticus 26:5	No cases in Isaiah
	Field crops and grain	11	Isaiah 23:3, 30:23	
	Progeny (biological descendants)	**182**	Isaiah 1:4, 6:13, 14:20, 41:8, 43:5, 44:3, 45:19,25, 48:19, **53:10**, 54:3, 57:3,4, 59:21[3x], 61:9[2x], 65:9,23, 66:22	
	Semen	8	Leviticus 15:32	No cases in Isaiah

The manner in which the noun זֶרַע is applied in the Hebrew Bible is that, when used in reference to (generic) offspring, the term is implicitly plural, and where it concerns an explicitly identified offspring, it is implicitly singular.[17] Moreover, it can be easily demonstrated that, when זֶרַע is used in reference to children, it exclusively refers to biological descendants.

In Isaiah 53:10, however, the term זֶרַע is not a "stand alone" noun; it is part of an idiomatic expression that involves a verb in conjunction with the noun, namely, the Hebrew expression is יִרְאֶה זֶרַע (*yir'EH ZEra*), literally, **[he] shall see seed**. The KJV adds the term "his" before the word "seed". This is simply not congruent with the Hebrew text, since the Hebrew term for **his seed** is the word זַרְעוֹ (*zar'o*), a word that does not appear in this verse. In the Hebrew Bible, idiomatic expressions in which a verb is combined with the compound noun זֶרַע, regardless of its specific application, the reference is always to physical *seed*, as demonstrated by the following examples from the Hebrew Bible:

- Genesis 1:11,12 - מַזְרִיעַ זֶרַע (*mazRI'a ZEra*), **yielding seed**
- Genesis 19:32,34 - וּנְחַיֶּה מֵאָבִינוּ זָרַע (*u'n'haYEH mei'aVInu ZAra*) **and let us bring to life seed from our father**
- Genesis 38:8 - וְהָקֵם זֶרַע (*v'haQEIM ZEra*), **and [you] establish offspring**
- Isaiah 30:23 - זַרְעֲךָ אֲשֶׁר־תִּזְרַע (*zar'aCHA aSHER tizRA*) **your seed that you will sow**
- Amos 9:13 - בְּמֹשֵׁךְ הַזָּרַע (*b'moSHECH ha'ZAra*) **the one who carries the seed [for sowing]**

The idiomatic expression יִרְאֶה זֶרַע in Isaiah 53:10 is similar to these examples; it refers to one who will be able to procreate and see his descendants. Although this particular idiomatic expression appears only once in the Hebrew Bible, a similar expression, רָאָה בָנִים (*ra'AH vaNIM*), **[he] saw sons**, is used on several

[17] A detailed discussion of this is found in the essay: *The "Seed of A Woman": A Kernel of Deception* – http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Gen315.pdf

occasions (in different forms of the expression; see examples below), and it clearly demonstrates that *seeing seed/children* refers to having and seeing biological descendants. In the following passage, the reader is told that Joseph saw his own descendants of several generations. Remember, Ephraim and Menasheh were the sons of Joseph:

> **Genesis 50:23 – And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation; also the children of Machir, the son of Menasheh, were brought up upon Joseph's knees.**

The next case speaks of the righteous persons and their families experiencing the bliss in seeing their descendants:

> **Psalms 128:6 – And you shall see your children's children; peace be on Israel.**

In the next passage, Job, the righteous Gentile, experienced the bliss described in the previous example:

> **Job 42:16 – And Job lived after this a hundred and forty years, and saw his sons and his grandsons, four generations.**

The idiomatic expressions for *seeing seed* or *seeing sons* or *seeing children*, as used in the Hebrew Bible, simply describe the experience of seeing one's own family propagate for one or more generations.

Another important fact is that זֶרַע is also the Hebrew term for **semen/sperm**, which supports the notion that the term זֶרַע in this verse refers exclusively to progeny, to physical descendants, and never to figurative (or spiritual) children.[18]

By contrast, the Hebrew term בֵּן\בָּנִים (***baNIM\BEN***), **sons\a son**, commonly used when referring to (a) real son(s), is also used in a figurative sense. In the following passage, David asks the wealthy but selfish *Naval*, who is not his father, for food, using the term בֵּן:

> **1Samuel 25:8 - Ask your youths and they will tell you, and may the youths find favor in your eyes, for we have come on a festive day. Give now, what your hand will find, for your servants and for your son David.**

In the next example, using the term בֵּן, King Ahaz asks the king of Assyria, who is obviously not his father, for help against the two warring armies besieging Jerusalem:

> **2Kings 16:7 - And Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-Pileser the king of Assyria, saying, "I am your servant and your son. Come up and save me from the hand of the king of Aram and from the hand of the king of Israel who have risen up against me."**

[18] It is interesting to note that the *LXX* uses the noun **σπερμα** (***sperma***), which is #4690 in Strong's Lexicon, where it is defined as, "something sown, i.e. seed (including the male 'sperm'); by implication, offspring; specially, a remnant (figuratively, as if kept over for planting): -- issue, seed.

The same rule also applies to the Hebrew term בַּת\בָּנוֹת (***banot\bat***), **daughters\a daughter**. In the following passage, the term used here for **women** is בָּנוֹת:

> **Proverbs 31:29 - Many women have acquired wealth, but you surpass them all.**

In the next example, the term used for **daughters** is בָּנוֹת:

> **Song of Songs 6:9 - My dove, my perfect one, is but one; she is one to her mother, she is the pure one of she who bore her; daughters saw her and praised her, queens and concubines, and they lauded her;**

Clearly, the Jewish understanding of the term זֶרַע in Isaiah 53:10 is the correct one since, when used with regard to people, it refers to people who are natural descendants of their ancestors.

The second component of the servant's reward, though rendered essentially in the same way by both Jewish and Christian translators, "**... he shall prolong his days ...**", is understood differently by Jews and Christians. Christians generally view this phrase as being synonymous with *eternal life*, while Jews see it as *a long mortal lifetime*. Once again, these interpretations cannot both be valid.

The Hebrew idiomatic expression rendered as "**... he shall prolong his days ...**" is יַאֲרִיךְ יָמִים (***ya'arich yamim***). This expression, in various conjugations and in several variations, is relatively common in the Hebrew Bible. In each case, the context makes it clear that the phrase refers to prolonging a person's lifetime on earth and not to eternal life. The identical form of the expression in Isaiah 53:10, יַאֲרִיךְ יָמִים, is used in the Hebrew Bible on three additional occasions:

> **Deuteronomy 17:20 – So that his heart will not be haughty over his brothers, and so that he will not turn away from the commandment, either to the right or to the left, in order that he may prolong [his] days [יַאֲרִיךְ יָמִים] in his kingdom, he and his sons, among Israel.**

> **Proverbs 28:16 – A ruler who lacks understanding is a great oppressor, for he who hates unlawful gain will prolong [his] days [יַאֲרִיךְ יָמִים].**

> **Ecclesiastes 8:13 – But it will not be well with the wicked, and he will not prolong [his] days [וְלֹא־יַאֲרִיךְ יָמִים], like a shadow, because he does not fear God.**

These examples demonstrate that יַאֲרִיךְ יָמִים refers to extending someone's mortal lifetime on earth. The notion of *eternal life* appears but once in the Hebrew Bible as the expression חַיֵּי עוֹלָם (***<u>h</u>ayei <u>o</u>lam***), which literally translates as **life of eternity**, i.e., **eternal life** (Daniel 12:2).

Finally, the two renditions of the third component of the servant's reward show a slight difference, but not a substantive divergence in context. The Jewish version has, "**... and God's purpose shall prosper in his hand ...**", and the KJV has, "**... and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand ...**". This phrase represents the

proverbial "icing on the cake" – ***Israel*** will be successful in carrying out its divinely ordained mission.

Relating this verse to the hypothesis, ***Israel*** = ***servant***, God continues His response to the (Gentile) nations and affirms that some of ***Israel***'s suffering was, indeed, punishment for the nation's own sins. However, when ***Israel***, as a nation, will acknowledge its iniquity by repenting, the Jewish people will be redeemed and rewarded with growth in numbers, prolonged life, and success as God's light unto the nations.

✡ **Question: Does *Israel* (as God's servant) "fit" into Isaiah 53:10?**
✡ **Answer: YES!**

ISAIAH 53:11

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:11	He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.	From the toil of his soul he shall see [and he shall] be satisfied; with his knowledge My servant will vindicate the righteous before the multitudes, and their iniquities he shall carry.	מֵעֲמַל נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְאֶה יִשְׂבָּע בְּדַעְתּוֹ יַצְדִּיק צַדִּיק עַבְדִּי לָרַבִּים וַעֲוֹנֹתָם הוּא יִסְבֹּל׃	נג,יא

There is a discrepancy between the two translations of the highlighted Hebrew phrase. An explanation of the syntax of the Hebrew phrase will help determine which of the two translations is correct.

The Hebrew phrase is יַצְדִּיק צַדִּיק עַבְדִּי לָרַבִּים (***yatsDIQ tsaDIQ avDI laraBIM***). The first word, יַצְדִּיק, is the 3rd-person, masculine, singular, future tense conjugation in the ***hif'IL*** stem of the root verb צדק. In this particular stem, the active causative form of the Hebrew verb, this verb is used in the Hebrew Bible in the context of **to vindicate**, to **declare innocent**, (e.g., Exodus 23:7, Job 27:5). The next word, צַדִּיק, means **righteous**, which appears in the Hebrew Bible both as a compound noun and as an adjective. The next word, עַבְדִּי, means **my servant**. The last word, לָרַבִּים, is a combination of a preposition -לְ (***l***^{e}***-***), meaning **to**, **for**, the definite article -הַ (***ha-***), and the plural noun רַבִּים (***raBIM***), meaning **many**, **multitudes**. An almost literal translation of the phrase is, "he, My servant, will justify the righteous (ones) to the many", which is consistent with the Jewish translation. It is not the servant who is described here as **righteous**. The phrase conveys the idea that the servant will vindicate the righteous.

According to the syntax of the Hebrew phrase, the term **righteous** is out of place in the KJV rendition "**my righteous servant**". The KJV rendition continues to associate the idea of a righteous ("sinless") individual bearing the iniquities of others as a way to justify those others via the vicarious atonement obtained

through his death. This is contrary to what the Hebrew Bible teaches, as was previously noted.

Israel will eventually discover and understand that God has had a special purpose in allowing such wickedness by the (Gentile) nations, and will not challenge God's actions. In the end, ***Israel*** will vindicate mankind through the knowledge of God and Torah, a theme often encountered in the Hebrew Bible in terms of ***Israel*** being a **light unto the** (Gentile) **nations** and teaching them (e.g., Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 42:6, 60:3, 61:6-9; Zechariah 8:13, 23). Also, as was noted in the analysis of Isaiah 53:4, ***Israel*** was the victim who unjustly bore the penalties from the iniquities of others. The (Gentile) nations' own misdeeds were what inflicted the excessive suffering on ***Israel***. The Jewish people have been forced to carry ills and pains because of the direct actions of the (Gentile) nations throughout history, and they have suffered (and continue to suffer) the results of the (Gentile) nations' sickness. The (Gentile) nations have held that the Jews are cursed by God, and they were (and still are) determined to see that the Jews suffer the consequences of this supposed curse that is upon them.

✡ **Question:** **Does *Israel* (as God's servant) "fit" into Isaiah 53:11?**
✡ **Answer:** **YES!**

ISAIAH 53:12

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
53:12	Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.	Therefore, I will allot him a portion among the multitudes, and with the mighty he shall share booty, because he has bared his soul to death, and with transgressors he was counted; and he bore the sin of many, and he will [continue to] intercede for the transgressors.	לָכֵן אֲחַלֶּק־לוֹ בָרַבִּים וְאֶת־עֲצוּמִים יְחַלֵּק שָׁלָל תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱרָה לַמָּוֶת נַפְשׁוֹ וְאֶת־פֹּשְׁעִים נִמְנָה וְהוּא חֵטְא רַבִּים נָשָׂא וְלַפֹּשְׁעִים יַפְגִּיעַ׃	נג,יב

Apart from a change in tenses in the last phrase, the two translations are reasonably consistent. The Hebrew phrase תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱרָה לַמָּוֶת נַפְשׁוֹ (***TAhat ASHER he'ERAH la'MAVET naphSHO***), is generally rendered in two ways by Jewish sources, (a) "**... because he has bared his soul to death ...**", and (b) "**... because he poured out his soul to death ...**". The KJV renders it, "**... because he hath poured out his soul unto death ...**", which agrees with the latter of the common Jewish renditions. The somewhat subtle difference here does not significantly impact context. The latter of the two Jewish renditions is based on a single instance of the root verb ערה (***Ayin-RESH-HEH***) in a different conjugation at Genesis 24:20, where it is rendered as "... **she poured out [her jug]** ..." in reference to Rebecca (even here one can say that pouring out of a container is tantamount to exposing whatever was contained in it). In two other instances, at Leviticus 20:18,19,

where the verb appears exactly as in Isaiah 53:12, הֶעֱרָה, it is rendered as "**... he has bared [her source] ...**" and "**... he would be baring [his flesh] ...**", respectively. In every other application of this verb in the Hebrew Bible, a total of 16 cases excepting Genesis 24:20, particularly in the five other applications by Isaiah – Isaiah 3:17, 19:7, 22:6, 32:11,15 – the verb is used in the context of **baring** or **exposing** something. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the former of the above two Jewish renditions, "**... because he has bared his soul to death ...**", is more consistent with its general usage both by Isaiah and throughout the rest of the Hebrew Bible. This rendition also removes the subtlety built into the Christian interpretation aimed at advancing the concept of human vicarious atonement.

The last phrase in the verse, rendered as "**... and he will [continue to] intercede for the transgressors.**" in the Jewish translation, and as "**... and made intercession for the transgressors.**" in the KJV, requires comment. It was previously noted in the analysis of Isaiah 53:6, the root verb פגע is used in the Hebrew in two different contexts. Both translations agree on its application here, in Isaiah 53:12, but they differ on the tenses. The verb used here is יַפְגִּיעַ (***yafGI'a***), the 3rd-person singular, masculine, future tense conjugation of the root verb פָּגַע in the ***hif'IL*** stem (the active causative form of the Hebrew verb). The significance of the correct tense here is that, in His response to the (Gentile) nations, God expects ***Israel*** to continue in its role as intercessor on their behalf. This is, in fact, still the case today as well. Most Jewish congregations recite, usually in the vernacular, a prayer for the government. The text varies from congregation to congregation. As an example, consider the English translation of a liturgical passage from a commonly used prayer book titled, "*Prayer for the Welfare of the Government*", which is recited on every Sabbath and Holy Day:[19]

> **He Who grants salvation to kings and dominion to rulers, Whose kingdom is a kingdom spanning all eternities; Who releases David, His servant, from the evil sword; Who places a road in the sea and a path in the mighty waters – may He bless the President, the Vice President, and all the constituted officers of government of the land.**
>
> **The King Who reigns over kings, in His mercy may He sustain them and protect them; from every trouble, woe and injury, may He rescue them; and put into their heart and into the heart of all their counselors compassion to do good with us and with all Israel, our brethren. In their days and in ours, may Judah be saved and may Israel dwell securely, and may the Redeemer come to Zion. So may it be His will. Now let us respond: Amen.**

Isaiah 53:12 foretells that the people of ***Israel***, as God's servant, will be compensated for having had to carry the ills afflicted on them throughout the ages, and will be rewarded for choosing this fate rather than abandon the Jewish faith and follow other gods their forefathers had not known. As was previously noted, the idea that ***Israel*** has borne the results of the wicked acts of others is not a new concept, neither is the fact that exiled Jews have interceded and prayed on behalf of those who ruled over them. The Jewish people will finally be vindicated, a vision that Ezekiel expresses so eloquently:

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19 *The ArtScroll Siddur [Kol Yaakov]*, p. 451, Published by Mesorah Publications, Ltd. (1997).

Ezekiel 34:27-30 – (27) "And the tree of the field will give forth its fruit and the land will give forth its produce, and they will know that I am the Lord when I break the bars of their yoke and rescue them from those who enslave them. (28) And they will no longer be a prey to the nations, and the beasts of the earth will not devour them, and they will dwell securely, with no one frightening them. (29) And I shall establish for them a plantation for renown, and they will no longer be hidden because of hunger in the land, and they will no longer bear the disgrace of the nations. (30) And they will know that I, the Lord their God, am with them, and they are My people, the house of Israel," says the Lord God.

✡ **Question:** **Does *Israel* (as God's servant) "fit" into Isaiah 53:12?**
✡ **Answer:** **YES!**

C. Interim Summary – Isaiah 53:9-12

Using a verse-by-verse analysis of the Hebrew text and with the help of a correct translation from the Hebrew, testing of the hypothesis formulated in Section III.B continued as part of the *Verification* stage of the *Scientific Method*.

In this final passage of the *Fourth Servant Song*, God responds to the (Gentile) nations with a description of what happened to ***Israel*** because of their sins, and then switches to a description of the rewards that await ***Israel*** for the suffering the people experienced at their hands. Based on its consistency with what the Hebrew Bible teaches and the witness of the historical record, this segment continues to confirm the validity of the hypothesis that ***Israel***, as God's servant, is the subject in the *Fourth Servant Song*.

The results obtained from the analysis of Isaiah 53:9-12 are included in the summary of the entire *Fourth Servant Song* in Section VII.

VII. SUMMARY OF THE FOURTH SERVANT SONG – ISAIAH 52:13 - 53:12

The process of the *Scientific Method* was applied to the study of the *Fourth Servant Song* of Isaiah, Isaiah 52:13-53:12, for the purpose of identifying the entity to which the prophet twice refers as עַבְדִּי.

In the *Observation* stage, the desired fair sample of "data" was collected, and it consisted of the following three data elements:

Data Element #1:	**“My servant” is a reference by God to one of His servants.**
Data Element #2:	**Nine instances located within the part of the Book of Isaiah that includes the four Servant Songs – Isaiah 41:8,9, 43:10, 44:1,2,21(2x), 45:4, 49:3 – positively identify the servant as *Israel*.**
Data Element #3:	***Israel* is the subject of the two chapters which surround the Fourth Servant Song.**

In the *Generalization* stage, this "data" led to the formulation of the following hypothesis:

✡ **Hypothesis**: ***Israel* is the servant in the Fourth Servant Song.**

The validity of this hypothesis was tested in the *Verification* stage using a verse-by-verse examination of the Hebrew text of the *Fourth Servant Song*. This consisted of detailed grammatical analysis, demonstration of contextual consistency with the teachings of the Hebrew Bible, and validation against the historical record. The cumulative results obtained in the *Verification* stage are summarized in Table VII-1:

Table VII-1 – Summary of results from Verification stage: Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Isaiah	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Who Is The "Speaker"?	Does Hypothesis "*Israel* = Servant" Fit?
52:13	Behold, My servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and he shall be very high.	God	YES
52:14	As many wondered about you, "How marred his appearance is from that of a man, and his features from that of people!"	God	YES
52:15	So shall he cause many nations to be startled; kings shall shut their mouths because of him, because that which had not been told to them they saw, and that which they had not heard they perceived.	God	YES
53:1	Who would have believed our report, and to whom was the arm of the Lord revealed?	The (Gentile) Nations	YES
53:2	And he came up like a sapling before it, and like a root out from dry ground; he had no features and no splendor; and we saw him that he had no appearance; and how could we desire him?	The (Gentile) Nations	YES
53:3	He was despised and forsaken by men; a man of pains, and accustomed to illness, and as one from whom we would hide our faces; he was despised, and we had no regard for him.	The (Gentile) Nations	YES
53:4	Indeed, he bore our illnesses, and our pains – he has carried them, yet we had regarded him plagued, smitten by God, and oppressed.	The (Gentile) Nations	YES
53:5	But he was pained because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities; the chastisement of our welfare was upon him, and with his wounds we were healed.	The (Gentile) Nations	YES
53:6	We all went astray like sheep, we have turned, each one on his way, and the Lord inflicted upon him [or, accepted his prayers for] the iniquity of all of us.	The (Gentile) Nations	YES
53:7	He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he would not open his mouth; like a lamb to the slaughter he would be brought, and like a ewe that is mute before her shearers, and he would not open his mouth.	The (Gentile) Nations	YES

53:8	**From imprisonment and from judgment he was taken, and his generation who shall tell? For he was cut off from the land of the living; because of the transgression of my people, a plague came upon them.**	The (Gentile) Nations	YES
53:9	**And he gave his grave to the wicked, and to the wealthy in his deaths, because he committed no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.**	God	YES
53:10	**And the Lord wished to crush him, He made him ill; if his soul would acknowledge guilt, he shall have descendant [or, he shall see progeny], he shall prolong his days, and God's purpose shall prosper in his hand.**	God	YES
53:11	**From the toil of his soul he shall see [and he shall] be satisfied; with his knowledge My servant will vindicate the righteous before the multitudes, and their iniquities he shall carry.**	God	YES
53:12	**Therefore, I will allot him a portion among the multitudes, and with the mighty he shall share booty, because he has bared his soul to death, and with transgressors he was counted; and he bore the sin of many, and he will [continue to] interceded for the transgressors.**	God	YES

These results confirm the validity of the hypothesis that was tested. Consequently, the hypothesis becomes a "rule" or "law", which, for the case of the *Fourth Servant Song* of Isaiah, manifests itself as the definitive conclusion about the identity of the servant – ***Israel*** – and, thereby, it validates the Jewish interpretation.

Moreover, it has been demonstrated here and elsewhere that a thorough knowledge and understanding of the Hebrew language and of the Hebrew Bible are necessary, not optional, resources when attempting to develop a correct interpretation of a passage. Without these tools, it is likely that gross misinterpretations will result.

✡ **Conclusion: The servant in Isaiah's Fourth Servant Song is (the righteous remnant of) *Israel*.**

VIII. Where Do We Go from Here?

Is the job complete? In a sense, the answer is yes. The entity that is referred to as עַבְדִּי in Isaiah’s *Fourth Servant Song* has been positively identified, which was the stated goal of this analysis. However, since the Jewish perspective on Isaiah's *Fourth Servant Song* is not the only interpretation around, it is fair to consider the Christian perspective and see how it holds up when subjected to the same analytical process as was the Jewish interpretation.

The common, though not universal, Christian perspective has the Messiah as the subject of Isaiah's *Fourth Servant Song*, who, according to Christianity, is Jesus. In other words, the claim is that the passage, Isaiah 52:13-53:12, is about the Messiah (Judaism holds that the passage is about the messianic era, not specifically about the Messiah). The question is: "*Can both perspectives be simultaneously valid?*"

To help answer this question, the common Christian interpretation will be analyzed via the *Scientific Method* in a separate essay. The format of that analysis will generally parallel the format that was used in the present essay.

ISAIAH 7:14 – PART 1: AN ACCURATE GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

The verse Isaiah 7:14 is one of the most popular items in the portfolio of Christian missionaries. Commonly referred to as the "Virgin Birth proof text", missionaries identify this verse as the prophecy in the Christian "Old Testament" that foretold the future conception and birth of a child by a virgin, the “fulfillment” of which is described in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke with the accounts of Mary’s conceiving a child of the Holy Spirit and giving birth to Jesus.

Two important aspects of Isaiah 7:14 are examined in this 2-part essay. In Part 1, a detailed and accurate grammatical analysis of the Hebrew text of Isaiah 7:14 is presented, which demonstrates how some Christian translators have mistranslated key terms in the verse in order to change its original context.

In Part 2, several popular Christian arguments that are often used by Christian missionaries in defense of their interpretation of Isaiah 7:14, the so-called “proof text” for the “Virgin Birth”, are presented along with their respective refutations.[2]

II. TEXTS, TRANSLATIONS, PERSPECTIVES, AND LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

A. The Hebrew text, English translations, and a Gospel author’s application of Isaiah 7:14

Table II.A -1 shows side-by-side English renditions and the Hebrew text of Isaiah 7:14, as well as Matthew 1:23 in the New Testament. Matthew 1:23 is included since it contains the alleged quote of Isaiah 7:14 as part of the narrative that describes the conception and birth of Jesus. Both King James Version (KJV) translations also include the footnoted cross-references to each other.[3]

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:
- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as “h̲”
  - The letter כ is transliterated as “ch”
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as “k”
  - The letter ק is transliterated as “q”
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע – ***SHVA NA***) is transliterated as a superscripted “e” following the consonant
  - There is no “doubling” of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

[2] Isaiah 7:14 - Part 2: Refutation of Christian Apologetics - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Is714_2.pdf

[3] Cross-referenced passage notations are according to the New American Standard Bible (NASB).

Table II.A-1 – The Hebrew text of Isaiah 7:14 and other relevant texts

Source	Passage Citation	Text
תנ״ך **[*T*[e]*NACH* – Hebrew Bible]**	ישעיה ז, יד	לָכֵן יִתֵּן אדני הוּא לָכֶם אוֹת הִנֵּה הָעַלְמָה הָרָה וְיֹלֶדֶת בֵּן וְקָרָאת שְׁמוֹ עִמָּנוּאֵל׃
Author's Translation from the Hebrew	**Isaiah 7:14**	Therefore the Lord will Himself give you a sign: Here! The young woman is pregnant, and she shall give birth to a son; and you [young woman] shall call his name ***Imanu'EL***.
King James Version "Old Testament"	**Isaiah 7:14**	Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.**
King James Version New Testament	**Matthew 1:23**	Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel,* which being interpreted is, God with us.

Cross-referenced verses: * Isaiah 7:14 ** Matthew 1:23

Even a cursory look at these three translations reveals significant differences between the Jewish translation and both KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament renditions. Several corresponding key terms and phrases in the four versions are shown in highlighted form.

B. A survey of English translations of Isaiah 7:14

Following is a sample of Jewish and Christian English translations of Isaiah 7:14 and these are grouped in a specific manner that will facilitate the analysis.

1. Jewish translations

Table II.B.1-1 shows five renditions of Isaiah 7:14 from Jewish translations of the Hebrew Bible, including respective footnotes where applicable. The terminology shown in **bold highlighted font** is of particular significance to the analysis presented in this essay.

Table II.B.1-1 – Isaiah 7:14 as rendered by Jewish sources

Source	Translation
ArtScroll Tanach (AST)*[4]	Therefore, my Lord Himself will give you **a sign**: Behold, **the maiden will become pregnant** and bear a son, **and she will name** him **Immanuel**.
The Jerusalem Bible (JBK)[5]	Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you **a sign**: Behold, **the young woman is with child**, and she will bear a son, **and shall call** his name '**Immanu-el**'.
JPS Hebrew-English TANAKH (JPS)**[6]	Assuredly, my Lord will give you **a sign** of His own accord! Look, **the young woman is with child** and about to give birth to a son. **Let her name** him **Immanuel.** [g]
Judaic Classics Library (JCL)[7]	Therefore the Lord himself shall give you **a sign**; Behold, **the young woman is with child**, and she will bear a son, **and shall call** his name **Immanu-El**.
Judaica Press Tanach (JPT)***[8]	Therefore, the Lord, of His own, shall give you **a sign**; behold, **the young woman is with child**, and she shall bear a son, **and she shall call** his name **Immanuel**.

* AST Commentary: Either Isaiah's (Rashi) or Ahaz' (Radak) young wife will bear a son and, through prophetic inspiration, will give him the name Immanuel, which means "God is With Us." thus in effect prophesying that Judah will be saved from the threat of Rezin and Pekah.

** JPS Footnote: [g] Meaning "with us is God."

*** JPT commentary: Too detailed for purpose of this essay. It is summarized in the AST

2. Christian translations - Category I

Category I contains a collection of translations of Isaiah 7:14 from five Christian Bibles in which the renditions of the noun עַלְמָה (*alMAH*) are generally consistent with the Jewish versions. This group of Christian translations, including respective footnotes, is shown in Table II.B.2-1. The terminology shown in **bold highlighted font** is of particular significance to the analysis presented in this essay.

4 *The Stone Edition Tanach*, ArtScroll Series®, p. 964, Mesorah Publications, Ltd., Brooklyn, NY (1996)
5 *The Jerusalem Bible*, p. 485, Koren Publishers, Jerusalem, Israel (1998)
6 *JPS Hebrew-English TANAKH*, p. 860, The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, PA (2000)
7 *Judaic Classics Library*, Version III, on CD-ROM by Davka Corporation [http://www.davka.com] (1999)
8 The Book of Isaiah, Volume One, p. 67, The Judaica Press Inc., New York, NY (1992)

Table II.B.2-1 – Isaiah 7:14 as rendered by Christian sources – Category I

Source	Translation
Basic English Bible (BEB)[9]	For this cause the Lord himself will give you **a sign**; **a young woman is now with child**, and she will give birth to a son, **and she will give** him the name **Immanuel**.
The New English Bible (NEB)[10]	Therefore the Lord himself shall give you **a sign**: **A young woman is with child**, and she will bear a son, **and will call** him **Immanuel**.
New English Translation Bible (NET)*[11]	For this reason the sovereign master himself will give you **a confirming sign.**[24] Look, **this**[25] **young woman**[26] **is about to conceive**[27] and will give birth to a son. **You, young woman, will name** him[28] **Immanuel.**[29]
The New Jerusalem Bible (Catholic; NJB)[12]	The Lord will give you **a sign** in any case: It is this: **the young woman is with child** and will give birth to a son whom **she will call Immanuel**.
New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)[13]	Therefore the Lord himself will give you **a sign**. Look, **the young woman is with child** and shall bear a son, **and shall name** him **Immanuel**.

* The notes (**tn** - Translator's Note; **sn** - Study Note) in the NET Bible are informative:

24**tn** The Hebrew term אוֹת, "sign," can refer to a miraculous event (see v. 11), but it does not carry this sense inherently. Elsewhere in Isaiah the word usually refers to a natural occurrence or an object/person vested with special significance (see 8:18; 19:20; 20:3; 37:30; 55:13; 66:19). Only in 38:7-8, 22 does it refer to a miraculous deed that involves suspending or overriding natural laws. The sign outlined in vv. 14-17 involves God's providential control over events and their timing, but not necessarily miraculous intervention.

25**tn** Heb "the young woman." The Hebrew article has been rendered as a demonstrative pronoun ("this") in the translation to bring out its force. It is very likely that Isaiah pointed to a woman who was present at the scene of the prophet's interview with Ahaz. Isaiah's address to the "house of David" and his use of second plural forms suggests other people were present, and his use of the second feminine singular verb form ("you will name") later in the verse is best explained if addressed to a woman who is present.

26**tn** Traditionally, "virgin." Because this verse from Isaiah is quoted in Matt 1:23 in connection with Jesus' birth, the Isaiah passage has been regarded since the earliest Christian times as a prophecy of Christ's virgin birth. Much debate has taken place over the best way to translate this Hebrew term, although ultimately one's view of the doctrine of the virgin birth of Christ is unaffected. Though the Hebrew word used here (עַלְמָה, 'almah) can sometimes refer to a woman who is a virgin (Gen 24:43), it does not carry this meaning inherently. The word is simply the feminine form of the corresponding masculine noun עֶלֶם ('elem, "young man"; cf. 1 Sam 17:56; 20:22). The Aramaic and Ugaritic cognate terms are both used of women who are not virgins. The word seems to pertain to age, not sexual experience, and would normally be translated "young woman." The LXX translator(s) who later translated the Book of Isaiah into Greek sometime between the second and first century b.c., however, rendered the Hebrew term by the more specific Greek word παρθένος (parthenos), which does mean "virgin" in a technical sense. This is the Greek term that also appears in the citation of Isa 7:14 in Matt 1:23. Therefore, regardless of the meaning of the term in the OT context, in the NT Matthew's usage of the Greek term παρθένος clearly indicates that from his perspective a virgin birth has taken place.

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9 http://unbound.biola.edu/
10 *The New English Bible*, p. 817, Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press (1972)
11 http://www.bible.org/
12 *The New Jerusalem Bible*, p. 1200, Doubleday (1985)
13 http://biblestudytools.net/OnlineStudyBible/bible.cgi?new=1&word=therefore+the+lord+himself&section=1&version=nrs&language=en

27**tn** Elsewhere the adjective הָרָה (harah), when used predicatively, refers to a past pregnancy (from the narrator's perspective, 1 Sam 4:19), to a present condition (Gen 16:11; 38:24; 2 Sam 11:5), and to a conception that is about to occur in the near future (Judg 13:5, 7). (There is some uncertainty about the interpretation of Judg 13:5, 7, however. See the notes to those verses.) In Isa 7:14 one could translate, "the young woman is pregnant." In this case the woman is probably a member of the royal family. Another option, the one followed in the present translation, takes the adjective in an imminent future sense, "the young woman is about to conceive." In this case the woman could be a member of the royal family, or, more likely, the prophetess with whom Isaiah has sexual relations shortly after this (see 8:3).

28**tn** Heb "and you will call his name." The words "young lady" are supplied in the translation to clarify the identity of the addressee. The verb is normally taken as an archaic third feminine singular form here, and translated, "she will call." However the form (קָרָאת, qara't) is more naturally understood as second feminine singular, in which case the words would be addressed to the young woman mentioned just before this. In the three other occurrences of the third feminine singular perfect of I קָרָא (qara', "to call"), the form used is קָרְאָה (qar'ah; see Gen 29:35; 30:6; 1 Chr 4:9). A third feminine singular perfect קָרָאת does appear in Deut 31:29 and Jer 44:23, but the verb here is the homonym II קָרָא ("to meet, encounter"). The form קָרָאת (from I קָרָא, "to call") appears in three other passages (Gen 16:11; Isa 60:18; Jer 3:4 [Qere]) and in each case is second feminine singular.

29**sn** The name Immanuel means "God [is] with us."

3. Christian translations - Category II

Category II contains a collection of translations of Isaiah 7:14 from five Christian Bibles in which the renditions of the noun עַלְמָה are generally inconsistent with the Jewish versions. This group of Christian translations, including respective footnotes, is shown in Table II.B.3-1. The terminology shown in **bold highlighted font** is of particular significance to the analysis presented in this essay.

Table II.B.3-1 – **Isaiah 7:14 as rendered by Christian sources – Category II**

Source[14]	Translation
American Standard Version (ASV)	Therefore the Lord himself will give you **a sign**: behold, **a virgin shall conceive**, and bear a son, **and shall call** his name **Immanuel**.
Darby Translation	Therefore will the Lord himself give you **a sign**: Behold, **the virgin shall conceive** and shall bring forth a son, **and call** his name **Immanuel**.
King James Version (KJV)	Therefore the Lord himself shall give you **a sign**; Behold, **a virgin shall conceive**, and bear a son, **and shall call** his name **Immanuel**.
New International Version (NIV)*	Therefore the Lord himself will give you[1] **a sign**: **The virgin will be with child** and will give birth to a son, **and**[2] **will call** him **Immanuel**[3].
Young's Literal Translation (YLT)	Therefore the Lord Himself giveth to you **a sign**, Lo, **the Virgin is conceiving**, And is bringing forth a son, **And hath called** his name **Immanuel**,

* NIV footnotes:

[1] The Hebrew is plural.
[2] Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scrolls *and he* or *and they*
[3] Immanuel means *God with us*.

4. Comparing the treatment of key Hebrew vocabulary

a. Jewish translations

The Jewish translations (Table II.B.1-1) are ***consistent*** in correctly rendering the term הָעַלְמָה (***ha'alMAH***) [where the definite article -הָ (***ha-***), is used with the noun עַלְמָה] as **the young woman** or **the maiden**, preserving the definite article in their renditions. This indicates that Isaiah spoke of *a specific* young woman known to both him, the speaker, and to King ***AHAZ*** (אָחָז), the one being addressed.

The Jewish translations are generally ***consistent*** in their renditions of the adjective הָרָה (***haRAH***) in this verse. Four of the five sources quoted in Table II.B.1-1 render the verb "to be" in the present tense[15] as **is** (with child, i.e., has already conceived), whereas the *ArtScroll Tanach* has it in the future tense as **shall** (be with child, i.e., will conceive in the future). From the context of the narrative, the latter rendition is understood as being an *imminent* action, something that is about to occur in the near future.

b. Christian translations

[14] All five translations in this category are available on the Internet at http://www.biblegateway.com/, as detailed below.

[15] It is important to note that, in Hebrew, the conjugated forms of the present tense of the root verb היה, the infinitive of which is לִהְיוֹת (***li'h'YOT***), **to be**, is usually implied, not explicitly shown, in a sentence.

The Christian translations (Tables II.B.2-1 & Table II.B.3-1) are generally ***inconsistent*** in their renditions of the term הָעַלְמָה – some use the correct terminology for the noun itself, i.e., **young woman** or **maiden**, others use **virgin**; and some preserve the definite article, **the**, while others change it to the indefinite article, **a**. In general, most *modern* Christian translators (generally, represented by Category I) have rendered the noun עַלְמָה correctly.

The Christian translations are also generally ***inconsistent*** in their renditions of the adjective הָרָה in this verse. Among the five sources listed in Category I (Table II.B.2-1), four render the verb "to be" in the present tense, whereas the NET turns the adjective הָרָה into a verb that describes an imminent action. Among the five sources listed in Category II (Table II.B.3-1), three turn the adjective into a verb conjugated in the (indefinite) future tense, the YLT turns the adjective into a verb conjugated in the present participle, and the NIV uses the future tense of the verb "to be".

c. **Jewish translations compared with Christian translations**

Such comparison is not meaningful due to the diversity within each set of translations. In general, most *modern* Christian translations are closer to the correct Jewish translations, i.e., those that render the noun הָעַלְמָה as **the young woman** or the maiden, the verb "to be" in the present tense, and הָרָה as **with child**. Older Christian translations generally use **virgin**, a term that would have required the Hebrew term for a virgin, בְּתוּלָה (***b^{e}tuLAH***), without the definite article, to be in the original Hebrew text.

C. The Christian perspective on Isaiah 7:14

The Christian interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 is based on the claim that it is a prophetic foretelling of the "Virgin Birth", the miraculous conception and birth of Jesus. Consequently, this verse in the Hebrew Bible is a foundational element of the Christian doctrine of the "Virgin Birth".

The following passage in the New Testament contains the account of the conception, birth, and naming of Jesus:

> **Matthew 1:20-23(KJV) - (20) But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. (21) And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. (22) Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, (23) Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.**

The relationship between this passage and the verse in Isaiah is established by the author in v. 23, which bears some resemblance to many Christian renditions of Isaiah 7:14. The author of the Gospel of Matthew states in v. 22 that the very next verse is the fulfillment of a prophecy, namely, that Jesus ('the Lord') will be born of a virgin, and that the name "***Emmanuel***" (**'God with us'**, according to the author of the Gospel of Matthew) indicates that he is, indeed, divine.

D. The Jewish perspective on Isaiah 7:14

The seventh chapter in the Book of Isaiah begins by describing the military crisis that was confronting King ***AHAZ*** (אָחָז) of the Kingdom of Judah. Around the year 732 B.C.E., the House of David was facing imminent destruction at the hands of two warring kingdoms: the Northern Kingdom of Israel, led by King ***PEqah*** (פֶּקַח), and the Kingdom of Syria (Aram), led by King ***R^eTSIN*** (רְצִין). These two armies had besieged Jerusalem. Isaiah records that the House of David and King ***AHAZ*** were gripped with fear. God sent the prophet Isaiah to reassure King ***AHAZ*** that divine protection was at hand – God would protect him and his kingdom and that their deliverance was assured, and these two hostile armies would fail in their attempt to subjugate Jerusalem.

It is clear from the narrative in this chapter, that Isaiah's declaration (Isaiah 7:14-16) was a prophecy about the unsuccessful siege of Jerusalem by the two armies from the north. The next two verses, Isaiah 7:15-16, state that, by the time this child (whose imminent birth was foretold in Isaiah 7:14) reaches the age of maturity ("**… he knows to reject bad and choose good …**"), the kings of the two enemy nations will be gone; in fact, they will be killed. Two Biblical accounts, 2Kings 15:29-30 and 2Kings 16:9, record the contemporaneous fulfillment of this prophecy with these two kings being assassinated. With an understanding of the context of Isaiah 7:14 alone, it is evident that the name of the child in Isaiah 7:14, ***Imanu'EL***, is a sign which points to the divine protection that King ***AHAZ*** and his people would enjoy from their otherwise certain demise at the hands of these two enemies. Clearly, Isaiah 7:14 is a near-term prophecy that is part of an historic narrative, and one that was fulfilled in the immediate time frame, not some seven-and-a-half centuries in the future.

E. Linguistic expansions of the Hebrew text of Isaiah 7:14

The highlighted words in Table II.A-1, terms about which there exist major disagreements between Christian translations and interpretations and the Jewish translations and interpretations, are now examined more closely

1. אוֹת (*OT*) – A sign

The various applications of the noun אוֹת in the Hebrew Bible are shown in Table II.E.1-1.

Table II.E.1-1 – Applications of אוֹת in the Hebrew Bible

Hebrew Term	Meaning	#	Reference	Comments
אוֹת	a visible sign, a signal	32	**Isaiah 7:14**, 38:22	
	an exemplary model, a marvelous deed	36	Isaiah 44:25	
	an example	9	Isaiah 19:20	
	a sign to determine times of festivals	1	Genesis 1:14	The luminaries in the sky
	an insignia	1	Numbers 2:2	The tribal banners

The significant attribute in all applications of אוֹת is that each represents a physically perceptible mark or signal, i.e., each is audible, or visible, or can otherwise be sensed – none is hidden or imperceptible.

2. הָעַלְמָה (*ha'alMAH*) – The young woman

The seven applications of the noun עַלְמָה in the Hebrew Bible are shown in Table II.E.2-1.

Table II.E.2-1 – Applications of עַלְמָה in the Hebrew Bible

Hebrew Term	Transliteration	Meaning	#	Reference	Comments
הָעַלְמָה	***ha'alMAH***	the young woman	3	Genesis 24:43; Exodus 2:8; **Isaiah 7:14**	The noun עַלְמָה always signifies **a young woman of marriageable age**.
בְּעַלְמָה	***b^ealMAH***	with a young woman	1	Proverbs 30:19	
עֲלָמוֹת	***alaMOT***	young women	2	Psalms 68:26; Song of Songs 1:3	Plural of עַלְמָה
וַעֲלָמוֹת	***va'alaMOT***	and young women	1	Song of Songs 6:8	

The noun עַלְמָה has a corresponding masculine noun, עֶלֶם (***Elem***), **a young man** (of marriageable age), which has two applications in the Hebrew Bible: הָעָלֶם (***ha'Alem***), **the young man**, at 1 Samuel 17:56, and לָעֶלֶם (***la'Elem***), **to the young man**, at 1 Samuel 20:22.

A related term found in the Hebrew Bible is עֲלוּמִים (***aluMIM***), youth, young manhood, young womanhood, which appears in various declinations at, Isaiah 54:4; Psalms 89:46, 90:8; Job 20:11, 33:25.

A common application of עַלְמָה in Modern Hebrew is in the formal introduction of **a young woman**, i.e., "**...הָעַלְמָה**", meaning, "**Miss ...** ".

The salient point concerning these terms is that their common thread is *youth*, which associates these terms with a specific age group rather than with a state of sexual purity (i.e., virginity).

3. הָרָה (*haRAH*) – She [is] with child

The term הָרָה appears in the Hebrew Bible on 12 occasions – once as a verb in a metaphoric form that speaks of conceiving an idea, and 11 times as an adjective that describes a pregnant woman.

According to the Hebrew grammar, if the term הָרָה were a verb, then it would have to be the 3rd-person, singular, masculine, past tense conjugation of the root verb הרה, the infinitive of which is לַהֲרוֹת (***laha*ROT**), **to conceive** (for a female) or **to impregnate** (for a male). Consequently, when the term הָרָה is used in connection with a female, then that female is the noun in the sentence, the term הָרָה is the adjective that describes the noun (in this case, describes the female as pregnant). In such cases, the relevant verb is the present tense of the verb לִהְיוֹת (***li'h'*YOT**), **to be**, which is implicit.[16] To help demonstrate this, the various conjugations of this root verb הרה are shown in Table II.E.3-1:[17]

<u>Table II.E.3-1</u> – The conjugations of the root verb הרה (infinitive לַהֲרוֹת)

Past Tense		Present Participles		Future Tense	
[1]הָרִיתִי	I impregnated (if spoken by a male) I conceived (if spoken by a female)	הוֹרֶה	(a male) impregnating	אַהֲרֶה	I shall impregnate (if spoken by a male) I shall conceive (if spoken by a female)
הָרִיתָ	you impregnated (to a male)			תַּהֲרֶה	you will impregnate (to a male)
[2]הָרִית	you conceived (to a female)	הוֹרָה	(a female) conceiving	תַּהֲרִי	you will conceive (to a female)
הָרָה	**he impregnated (male only)**			יַהֲרֶה	he will impregnate
[3]הָרָתָה	she conceived (female only)			תַּהֲרֶה	she will conceive

1. Numbers 11:12. 2. Judges 13:3. 3. Genesis 16:4

[16] It is important to point out at this point that, in Hebrew, the conjugated forms of the present tense of the root verb היה (the infinitive of which is לִהְיוֹת), is generally not explicitly shown in a sentence.

[17] A special note of thanks to Professor Mordochai Ben-Tziyyon, formerly Chairman of the *TeNACH* Department at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel, for drawing my attention to the issue that plagues many translations of the term הָרָה and for providing this table of relevant conjugations of the root verb הרה. I added references to those terms used in the Hebrew Bible. There are several poetic forms of verb conjugations used in the Hebrew Bible, which are not included since these are not relevant to our analysis.

With the above important information in mind, Table II.E.3-2 shows the various applications of the actual term הָרָה in the Hebrew Bible.

Table II.E.3-2 – Applications of the term הָרָה in the Hebrew Bible

Hebrew term	Type	Meaning	#	Reference	Comments
הָרָה	**verb**	to conceive or scheme a thought that spawns in a person's mind	1	Psalms 7:15	A metaphoric applications of the verb in the masculine gender
	adjective	pregnant, with child	11	e.g., Exodus 21:22; Judges 13:5,7; **Isaiah 7:14**; Jeremiah 31:7; Amos 1:13	A female that has conceived but has not yet given birth

As shown above, the verb and adjective are identically spelled. The only way to distinguish the verb הָרָה (when conjugated in the 3rd-person, singular, masculine, present tense) from the adjective הָרָה is via the context.

4. וְקָרָאת (*v^e^qaRAT*) – And you shall call

The verb קָרָא (***qaRA***) appears (in various conjugations) 738 times in the Hebrew Bible. This verb is applied in several contexts, the most prominent of which are, **[to] call** (as in summon someone), **[to] announce**, **[to] read**, **[to] name**, as well as in several variations of these that are not important here. Table II.E.4-1 shows the verb forms from the Hebrew Bible which most closely resemble the term וְקָרָאת that appears in Isaiah 7:14.

Table II.E.4-1 – Applications of וְקָרָאת in the Hebrew Bible[18]

Hebrew Term	Meaning	#	Reference	Remarks
וְקָרָאת	and you shall name	3	Genesis 16:11; **Isaiah 7:14**, 60:18	Grammatically, this is a 2nd-person, singular, feminine gender verbal conjugation. Yet, almost all translations render it as if conjugated in the 3rd-person, singular, feminine gender.

The verb קָרָאת (***qaRAT***) is actually conjugated in the 2nd-person, singular, feminine, past tense, i.e., **[you] named**. However, the conjunction -וְ, **and**, can have an additional function, it changes the tense of the verb that it

[18] Two applications were not included. One instance at Jeremiah 3:4 of קָרָאת, **you called**, i.e., 2nd-person, singular, feminine, past tense conjugation, without the conversive-vav, at Jeremiah 3:4. The other is an instance of וְקָרָאת, at Deuteronomy 31:29, which derives from a root verb that is a homonym of קָרָא with a different meaning, **[to] encounter, [to] meet**. There is also an instance of קָרָאת of this homonym root verb at Jeremiah 44:23, but without the conversive-vav, which is also not included here.

modifies[19]. The net effect is that, in addition to functioning as the preposition **and**, it also reverses the tense of the verb – if the verb is conjugated in the past tense, the *conversive-vav* changes it to the future tense, and vice versa. The context of a Biblical passage determines when this "reversion" occurs. In the case of Isaiah 7:14, as it relates to the term וְקָרָאת, the tense is reversed and the term acquires the meaning **and you shall call**.

5. עִמָּנוּאֵל (*Immanu'EL*) - Immanuel

The name עִמָּנוּאֵל appears twice in the Hebrew Bible, at Isaiah 7:14, 8:8.[20] This name also appears once as a two-word phrase, עִמָּנוּ אֵל (***imMANU EL***), at Isaiah 8:10 to convey, via the phrase כִּי עִמָּנוּ אֵל (***KI imMANU EL***), **for God is with us**, the special significance of the name עִמָּנוּאֵל (see Isaiah 8:18).

<u>Table II.E.5-1</u> – Applications of עִמָּנוּאֵל in the Hebrew Bible

Hebrew Term	Transliteration	Meaning	#	Reference	Remarks
עִמָּנוּאֵל	***imanu'EL***	God is with us	2	**Isaiah 7:14**, 8:8	Some texts use עִמָּנוּ אֵל
עִמָּנוּ אֵל	***iMANU EL***		1	Isaiah 8:10	עִמָּנוּ אֵל is used uniformly in all Masoretic Text renditions

F. Comparing two similar verses

The verses Isaiah 7:14 and Genesis 16:11, shown in Table II.F-, share several terms and have a similar grammatical structure. A comparison of these two verses provides additional insight into the Hebrew linguistics used in Isaiah 7:14.

[19] This grammatical operation is known in Hebrew grammar as וָו־הָהִפּוּךְ (***VAV-ha'hiPUCH***), **the conversive-vav** [***vav*** is the sixth letter in the Hebrew alphabet].

[20] There are insignificant variations in the Hebrew texts: some use עִמָּנוּאֵל and others use עִמָּנוּ אֵל. It is worthwhile to note that our earliest text, the *<u>Isaiah A Scroll</u>* from Qumran Cave 1 (1QIsa[a]), has עִמָּנוּאֵל in all three locations [see http://www.ao.net/~fmoeller/qum-7.htm & http://www.ao.net/~fmoeller/qum-8.htm].

Table II.F-1 – Comparing Isaiah 7:14 with Genesis 16:11

A Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text
Isaiah 7:14	ישעיה ז, יד
Therefore the Lord will Himself give you a sign: Here! The young woman is with child, and she shall give birth to a son; and you [young woman] shall call his name Immanu'el.	לָכֵן יִתֵּן אדני הוּא לָכֶם אוֹת הִנֵּה הָעַלְמָה הָרָה וְיֹלֶדֶת בֵּן וְקָרָאת שְׁמוֹ עִמָּנוּאֵל׃
Genesis 16:11	בראשית טז, יא
And the angel of the Lord said to her: "Behold! You are with child, and you shall give birth to a son, and you shall call his name Ishmael; because the Lord has noted your hardship.	וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מַלְאַךְ יהוה הִנָּךְ הָרָה וְיֹלַדְתְּ בֵּן וְקָרָאת שְׁמוֹ יִשְׁמָעֵאל כִּי־שָׁמַע יהוה אֶל־עָנְיֵךְ׃

Three corresponding phrases are highlighted in these two verses. Christian and Jewish translations are consistent on the **second phrase**, "**and she/you shall give birth to a son**", which involves the similar expressions וְיֹלֶדֶת (***v**^e^**yoLEdet***) for the "she" in Isaiah 7:14, and וְיֹלַדְתְּ (***v**^e^**yoLAd**^e^**t***) for the "you" in Genesis 16:11.

This is also the situation with the **third phrase** in Genesis 16:11, in which the term וְקָרָאת (see Section II.E.4) is rendered as a 2nd-person, feminine conjugation in the future tense, "**and you shall call his name Ishmael**". The case with the **third phrase** in Isaiah 7:14 is complicated by the fact that, as noted in Table II.E.4-1, most translators render the same verb, וְקָרָאת, as a 3rd-person, feminine conjugation in the future tense, while some (including the author), adhering to the Hebrew grammar, have it as a 2nd-person, feminine conjugation in the future tense. This difference can have an impact on how this verse is interpreted. The common translation as a 3rd-person, feminine conjugation introduces ambiguity, whereas the grammatically accurate 2nd-person, feminine conjugation leaves no doubt that these events would occur contemporaneously, i.e., in the second half of the eighth century B.C.E.

The renditions of the adjective הָרָה in the **first phrase** show significant variation among the different translations. One of the key terms here is the Hebrew word הִנֵּה (***hiNEI***) in Isaiah 7:14, which is most commonly used in the Hebrew Bible to draw attention to something and often also to create a condition of "here and now", as do its most commonly translated versions, **Behold!**, **Here!**, **Look!**. When this term appears in a sentence, an object is expected to follow, as in Isaiah 7:14, where הִנֵּה is followed by הָעַלְמָה, **"Here! The young woman [is]… "**. The corresponding term in Genesis 16:11 is the Hebrew word הִנָּךְ (***hiNACH***), which is the declination (or declension) of הִנֵּה in the 2nd-person, singular, feminine gender, so that the object is already included in it, and it is translated as, **"Behold! You [are]… "**. In both verses here, a certain female is being spoken of (the young woman in Isaiah 7:14) or spoken to (Hagar in Genesis 16:11), and each is said to be pregnant, הָרָה. This is consistent with the rule of

Hebrew grammar that, whenever the term הִנֵּה is used in reference to people, in any of its declined forms, the implication is that a specific person or a particular group of persons is being addressed or referred to by the speaker.

As an interesting follow-up to the survey of the various translations of Isaiah 7:14, side-by-side renditions of the phrase that refers to the respective female – the young woman (הָעַלְמָה) in Isaiah 7:14 and ***HaGAR*** (הָגָר) in Genesis 16:11 – in the 15 sources from which Isaiah 7:14 was quoted are shown in Table II.F-2.

Table II.F-2 – Comparison of Isaiah 7:14 and Genesis 16:11

	Source	Isaiah 7:14	Genesis 16:11	Present	Future
Jewish	AST	… will become pregnant*	… will conceive*		✓*✓*
	JBK	… [is] with child	… [art] with child	✓✓	
	JPS	… [is] with child	… [are] with child	✓✓	
	JCL	… [is] with child	… [are] with child	✓✓	
	JPT	… [is] with child	… will conceive*	✓	✓*
Category I	BEB	… [is] with child	… [art] with child	✓✓	
	NEB	…]is] with child	… [art] with child	✓✓	
	NET	… is about to conceive**	… [are now] pregnant	✓	✓**
	NJB	… [is] with child	… have conceived	✓✓	
	NRSV	… [is] with child	… have conceived	✓✓	
Category II	ASV	… shall conceive***	… [art] with child	✓	✓***
	Darby	… shall conceive***	… [art] with child	✓	✓***
	KJV	… shall conceive***	… [art] with child	✓	✓***
	NIV	… [will be] with child***	… [are now] with child	✓	✓***
	YLT	… is conceiving	… art conceiving	✓✓	

* Per some Jewish Sages, this signifies the imminent future, an event about to occur
** This modern Christian translation follows the style of some Jewish Sages
*** Per Christian theology, this signifies the distant future, some 730 years in the future

Given that, with respect to the time frame in question, the variations in the respective renditions by the Jewish and Christian "**Category I**" translations are inconsequential, it is evident that these two sets of translations are consistent in their renditions of both Isaiah 7:14 and Genesis 16:11. On the other hand, with the exception of the YLT, there is unambiguous evidence of Christological bias among the Christian "**Category II**" translations in their renditions of Isaiah 7:14 relative to Genesis 16:11 (the latter has no Christological value). This bias is also evident in the renditions of עַלְמָה as **a virgin** by this group of translations.

ISAIAH 7:14 – PART 2: REFUTING CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

In Part 1 of this 2-part essay, several sets of Jewish and Christian translations of Isaiah 7:14 were quoted and compared, and a detailed and accurate grammatical analysis of the Hebrew text of this was presented.[2] It was demonstrated how some Christian translators had mistranslated key terms in this passage in order to change its original message and turn it into a prophecy claimed to have been fulfilled in the "Virgin Birth", which has become a foundational doctrine of Christianity.

In this part, several popular apologetics that are used by Christian missionaries to defend their interpretation of Isaiah 7:14, the so-called "proof text" for the "Virgin Birth", are presented along with their respective refutations.

II. COMMON CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS ON ISAIAH 7:14 AND THEIR REFUTATIONS

Over the past 19 centuries, Christian apologists have been busy fashioning defenses (hence the term "apologist") for their interpretation of Isaiah 7:14, a verse allegedly quoted by the author of the Gospel of Matthew in Matthew 1:23. Many Christian-Jewish debates took place, often by coercion, in which various claims were made by the Christian side and countered by the Jewish side. For every Jewish response that refuted a Christian claim, new apologetics were developed to prove the validity of the fulfillment in Jesus of Isaiah's prophecy and to try to invalidate the Jewish perspective. This was very popular in medieval times, and it has regained popularity in our times as part of the aggressive campaign by various Hebrew-Christian and evangelical missionary organizations to convert Jews to Christianity. Some of these claims presented below along with their respective refutations.

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:

- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "h̲"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע – ***SHVA NA***) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

[2] Isaiah 7:14 - Part 1: An Accurate Grammatical Analysis – http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Is714_1.pdf

A. **Missionary Claim**: עַלְמָה [*almah*] means "virgin", therefore, this prophecy foretells the miraculous birth of Jesus

1. Straightforward usage of עַלְמָה

✞ **Christian claim:** The Christian argument is that עַלְמָה implicitly indicates virginity of the female in question. This is based on the contention that the noun refers to a female who is a virgin in every other instance where this term or one of its other forms is applied in the Hebrew Bible.

✡ **Jewish response:** The noun עַלְמָה represents an age group and not a state of sexual purity. As was shown in Part 1, the term עַלְמָה means **a young woman of marriageable age**, i.e. of child-bearing age [the male equivalent of which is עֶלֶם (***Elem***)], irrelevant of the status of her sexual experience, i.e., whether the young woman is a virgin is not at issue, as its usage in the Hebrew Bible suggests. For example, when one would say in English, "*A young woman went to the store*", nothing in this sentence contains any information about her virginity – it is a non sequitur. When the term עַלְמָה is used in a sentence in spoken Hebrew, or in a verse in Biblical Hebrew, there is no implicit reference to the young woman's virginity. Those who are fluent in the Hebrew language know this. Other more accurate vocabulary was available to Isaiah had he desired to specifically refer here to a virgin – the Hebrew term בְּתוּלָה (***b^etuLAH***) means **a virgin**. In fact, the Prophet applied the word בְּתוּלָה on five occasions throughout his Book (Isaiah 23:4,12, 37:22, 47:1, 62:5).

As was shown in Part 1, the noun עַלְמָה appears in the Hebrew Bible seven times (Genesis 24:43; Exodus 2:8; Is 7:14; Psalms 68:26; Proverbs 30:19; Song of Songs 1:3, 6:8). A closer look at the remaining six instances of עַלְמָה in the Hebrew Bible helps demonstrate the correct meaning of this term (highlighting added for emphasis throughout this document unless otherwise noted).

a. Genesis 24:43

> **Genesis 24:43 – Behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass, that when the young woman [הָעַלְמָה] comes forth to draw water, and I say to her, Give me, I beg you, a little water from your water jar to drink;**

This is a reference to Rebecca. When Abraham's servant saw her and later related the story, all he could possibly determine (from her appearance) is that she was a beautiful young female, he obviously could not have known whether or not she was a virgin, since he did not know her marital status. Moreover, if עַלְמָה had meant "virgin", why

would the Torah be redundant and explicitly refer to Rebecca as בְּתוּלָה, **a virgin**, in Genesis 24:16?

b. Exodus 2:8

> **Exodus 2:8 – And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the young woman [הָעַלְמָה] went and called the child's mother.**

Here the reference is to Miriam, the older sister of Aaron and Moses, though nothing more is known about her at this point. There is no other information given in this or any other passage within the Hebrew Bible that could help determine whether Miriam was a virgin in the scene described in Exodus 2:8.

c. Psalms 68:26

> **Psalms 68:26 – The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after; among them were young women [עֲלָמוֹת] beating tambourines.**

There is absolutely no way to determine from the context whether any or all of those tambourine-playing young women were virgins. To assume that all were virgins is a rather bold leap of faith. To simply conclude that none of them were married, given the fact that Jewish women often displayed their joy in dance and by playing musical instruments when rejoicing at a wedding or when welcoming their husbands from the battlefront (e.g., Exodus 15:20; 1 Samuel 18:6), would be a difficult position to defend.

d. Proverbs 30:19

> **Proverbs 30:18-19 – (18) There are three things which are too wonderful for me, indeed, four which I know not; (19) The way of a vulture in the sky; the way of a serpent on a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a [virile] man [גֶּבֶר (*GEver*)] with a young woman [בְּעַלְמָה].**

The only time that "**… the way of a [virile] man with a young woman …**" does not leave a trace (i.e., a broken hymen) is if the hymen of the עַלְמָה were already not intact.

e. Song of Songs 1:3, 6:8

> **Song of Songs 1:3 – Your anointing oils are fragrant, your name is oil poured out, therefore maidens [עֲלָמוֹת] love you.**

The עֲלָמוֹת, **young women**, loved King Solomon! Could they have been among his many concubines or wives?

Song of Songs 6:8 – There are sixty queens, and eighty concubines, and maidens [וַעֲלָמוֹת] without number.

60 wives, 80 concubines, and countless עֲלָמוֹת were listed as being among King Solomon's lovers.

Of the six applications listed above, only the first one is about a young woman, Rebecca, who is also explicitly identified as a virgin. There is no indication in any of the other five cases that the females were virgins.

2. Another proposal for the use of עַלְמָה and not בְּתוּלָה

✞ **Christian counter-claim:** Isaiah used the term עַלְמָה to remove ambiguity and add precision. The claim is that, had Isaiah used בְּתוּלָה, the reader could be confused thinking that the prophet may have intended to metaphorically refer to a nation and still maintain the core concept of virginity; an argument based on four cases where Isaiah uses the term בְּתוּלָה in this fashion (Isaiah 23:12, 37:22, 47:1, 62:5). The claim is that, in these four applications, on three occasions the reference is metaphorical to a nation, and on the fourth occasion, it is used as a pattern argument for the nation. It is further claimed that this pattern was also utilized by the Prophet Jeremiah on seven occasions.

✡ **Jewish response:** When all the relevant applications are examined, this proves to be a false counter argument. First, Isaiah actually uses the term בְּתוּלָה on five (5; not four) occasions, which includes Isaiah 23:4, the one left out by the Christian missionaries. Isaiah 23:4 together with Isaiah 62:5 constitute an effective counter-argument, since they demonstrate that the Prophet knew how to apply the term בְּתוּלָה:

> **Isaiah 23:4 - Be you ashamed, O Sidon; for the sea has spoken, even the strength of the sea, saying, I labored not, nor brought forth children, nor did I nourish up young men, nor brought up virgins [בְּתוּלוֹת (*b^e tuLOT*)].**
>
> **Isaiah 62:5 - For as a young man marries a virgin [בְּתוּלָה], so shall your sons marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.**

Second, the appeal to Jeremiah's use of בְּתוּלָה on seven occasions to support some alleged pattern is incomplete, since he applied this term a total of 15 times in his two books (Jeremiah and Lamentations). Clearly, he used it more often to speak specifically of a female who was a virgin rather than as a metaphorical reference to a nation.

Third, the comparison between Isaiah and only Jeremiah is flawed by being inherently biased. Would it not be more appropriate to study the

usage of the term in the entire Hebrew Bible? The term בְּתוּלָה appears in the Hebrew Bible 50 times – 9 times in the Pentateuch and 41 times in the rest of the Hebrew Bible. Such a study would leave no doubt that בְּתוּלָה is the correct term to use when referring to **a virgin**.

<u>Conclusion</u>: The Hebrew terms עַלְמָה and בְּתוּלָה are not interchangeable. It is ludicrous to suggest that Isaiah did not know that fact

B. <u>Missionary Claim</u>: This is a "dual fulfillment" foretelling the miraculous birth of Jesus

✞ **Christian claim:** Given the obvious problem created by the context of Isaiah 7:14 vis-à-vis Matthew's claim that the verse foretells the "Virgin Birth" of Jesus, the proposed solution is that Isaiah 7:14 must be a "dual prophecy", a prophecy that was fulfilled twice. The claim is that Isaiah's words to King ***A<u>H</u>AZ*** had two separate and distinct applications. Christian missionaries will concede that the first application of Isaiah's prophecy was addressed to King ***A<u>H</u>AZ*** and his crisis at hand. The child, ***ImmanuEL***, was born contemporaneously, and the "first leg" of this "dual prophecy" was fulfilled in the eighth century B.C.E. They insist, however, that there was a "second leg" of this "dual prophecy", and that it applies to the "Virgin Birth" of Jesus at the turn of the Era. With this elaborate explanation, they maintain that the apparent use of Isaiah 7:14 in the Gospel of Matthew is entirely appropriate. In short, it is claimed that Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled twice: once in 732 B.C.E., and a second time at the dawn of the Christian era.

✡ **Jewish response:** The notion of a "dual prophecy" is unbiblical. This idea appears to have been crafted in order to explain away a serious theological problem that a correct reading of Isaiah 7:14 creates for Christianity. No hint or evidence of a coming second fulfillment exists anywhere in this chapter or elsewhere in the Book of Isaiah. Moreover, if, as claimed, the word הָעַלְמָה means "a virgin" and Isaiah 7:14 was fulfilled twice, then who was the first virgin that conceived in King ***A<u>H</u>AZ***'s time? Were there two virgin births? In other words, if Christian missionaries claim that the "Virgin Birth", allegedly prophesied in Isaiah 7:14, was fulfilled twice, then who was that first virgin about to give birth to a baby boy in 732 B.C.E.? Bearing in mind the claim by Christian missionaries that the word הָעַלְמָה can only mean "a virgin", does this not imply that Mary was not the first and only virgin to conceive, remain a virgin, and give birth to a male child? If this happened before the "Virgin Birth" of Jesus, why would the latter be so special? Think about that!

Furthermore, if it is claimed that Isaiah 7:14 is a "dual prophecy", how could Isaiah 7:15-16 apply to Jesus when these verses continue to speak of this lad Immanu'el?

Isaiah 7:14-16 – (14) Therefore the Lord will Himself give you a sign: Here! The young woman is with child, and she shall give birth to a son; and you [young woman] shall call his name Immanu'el. (15) Cream and honey he [Immanu'el] shall eat when he knows to reject bad and choose good; (16) for, when the lad [Immanu'el] does not yet know to reject bad and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread, shall be abandoned."

If Isaiah's words are the substance of a "dual prophecy", the claimants should be expected to provide answers to the following questions:

- At what age did baby Jesus mature?
- What are the implications that Jesus sinned up to this age?
- Which two kingdoms were abandoned during the lifetime of Jesus?
- How could the Kingdom of Israel be dreaded during the first century C.E. if it did not exist since the eighth century B.C.E.?
- Where is the account of Jesus eating cream and honey recorded?

Does any of this make sense? From the Jewish perspective, it does not, and from the Christian point of view, it is indefensible.

✞ **Christian counter-claim:** Isaiah hints at a "dual prophecy" by using two different pronouns in addressing King ***AHAZ***, which, they claim, makes the idea biblical. The argument is that, in the seventh chapter of Isaiah the prophet addressed King ***AHAZ*** both in the singular "you" and in the plural "you".[3] They claim that, at times, Isaiah addressed King ***AHAZ*** alone, and in other places in this chapter, he addressed the House of David. Therefore, they conclude that, whenever the prophet addressed the House of David, or spoke in the plural "you", he was addressing the future Davidic dynasty (i.e., Jesus, the claimed heir to it, some seven centuries later). On the other hand, whenever the Prophet directly addressed King ***AHAZ***, or spoke in the singular "you", it concerned the crisis at hand created by the two kingdoms that were poised to defeat him. The missionaries further argue that in using Hebrew word לָכֶם (***lachem***), **(to) [plural] you**, in Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah addresses the future House of David and, thereby, points to the "Virgin Birth" of Jesus, which was associated with the House of David, not with King ***AHAZ*** and military crisis he was facing.

✡ **Jewish response:** In this chapter, it is clearly demonstrated that *both* the House of David *and* King ***AHAZ*** were threatened by the situation, not just King ***AHAZ*** himself. Every reference to the House of David and the plural "you", which was addressed to the entire Davidic House, ***referred only to the military crisis*** described herein. In fact, in the second verse of this chapter, Isaiah relates that both, King ***AHAZ*** and the House of David, were informed of the crisis created by the two warring kingdoms. This verse goes on to declare that both **his heart** [לְבָבוֹ (***l^evavo***); of King ***AHAZ*** – singular!] **and the heart of**

[3] Unlike the English language, the Hebrew language has distinct singular and plural pronouns.

his nation [וּלְבַב עַמּוֹ (***u'l*^e^*VAV* *a*MO**); of Judah – plural!] were trembling with fear. Not only King ***AHAZ*** alone was terrified of these two hostile armies, the entire House of David was scared as well.

Isaiah delivered the message in this fashion, by repeatedly addressing King ***AHAZ*** as the House of David and in the plural "you" throughout this chapter, for a reason. King ***AHAZ*** was a wicked king and, as such, was personally undeserving of God's merciful intervention. Nevertheless, King ***AHAZ*** was spared through the merit of the House of David. The two kingdoms intended to conquer Jerusalem in order to undermine the throne of David (Isaiah 7:6). God promised King David that his dynasty would be preserved regardless of the worthiness of the king on the throne (2Samuel 7:12-16). King ***AHAZ*** was saved by God in the merit of the House of David, not through his own worthiness.

Conclusion: "Dual prophecy", which is contrary to the teachings of the Hebrew Bible, is an idea born out of desperation.

C. Missionary Claim: Biblical Hebrew has no tenses

✞ **Christian claim:** Missionaries argue that tenses do not exist in Biblical Hebrew. Although they admit that Modern Hebrew has tenses, they insist that both medieval and modern grammarians recognize that Biblical Hebrew is an "aspectual" language rather than a language with tenses.[4] This means that the same form of a verb can be translated as past, present, or future, depending on the context and various grammatical cues. Some of the Jewish sources being quoted as examples (all are single sentences or portions of a sentence, possibly taken out of context) are RaDaQ (R' David Qimhi; 12th/13th century), R' Isaac Ben Yedaiah (13th century), R' David Altschuler (commentator; 18th century), Nahum Sarna (commentator; contemporary). Also quoted are passages from Gesenius' (1786-1842) *Hebrew Grammar*, and Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi's *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* – the former by a Christian theologian and grammarian, and the latter by Christian authors whose product received less than a glowing review in the *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*.[5]

✡ **Jewish response:** This argument is irrelevant. At issue is the term הָרָה in Isaiah 7:14. As was previously demonstrated (see Section II.E.3 in Part 1), הָרָה can be either an adjective in the feminine singular gender that describes a **pregnant** female, or the 3rd-person, singular, masculine, past tense, conjugation of the verb לַהֲרוֹת (***lahaROT*** – **to conceive**), meaning, **he impregnated**. Therefore, הָרָה is clearly not a verb in Isaiah 7:14. The relevant verb is the present tense of the verb "to be", i.e., **is**, which is used

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[4] See, for example, *Hebrew Tenses* - http://www.jewsforjesus.org/answers/prophecy/tenses
[5] http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/JHS/reviews/review162.htm

implicitly in the Hebrew Bible in all but two cases (Ecclesiastes 2:22; Nehemiah 6:6).

Although there are cases in the Hebrew Bible where the proper tense of a verb used must be inferred from context, the three perfect tenses, and even imperfect tenses, are generally present in the Hebrew Bible. The grammatical details of perfect/imperfect tense application are very complex and do not apply to Isaiah 7:14.

Finally, it is interesting to note that the specific 3rd-person, singular, feminine, future tense conjugation of the verb לַהֲרוֹת, which is תַּהֲרֶה (***tahaREH***), is not present in the Hebrew Bible applied as such. Rather, a poetic form of this verb conjugation, תַּהַר (***taHAR***), appears in the Hebrew Bible combined with the conversive-vav, i.e., וַתַּהַר (***va'taHAR***), on 28 occasions, thereby having the tense change from future to past to give it the meaning **and she conceived**, or **she became pregnant**.

<u>Conclusion</u>: The claim that Biblical Hebrew has no tenses cannot be supported from the text of the Hebrew Bible. Although there are instances where the tense of a verb must be gleaned from the context of a passage, the presence of all tenses, plus the imperative, proves the claim to be false.

D. <u>Missionary Claim</u>: בְּתוּלָה is not exclusive to "a virgin" in the Hebrew Bible

✞ **Christian claim:** The term בְּתוּלָה, as applied in the Hebrew Bible, is ambiguous since it is applied to cases that specifically denote “a virgin”, to cases that are not general and non-specific, and to cases where the female is definitely not a virgin. As examples of the first type, verses such as Leviticus 21:3,14 and Ezekiel 44:22 are cited. For examples of applications where it the status of the female is not known, verses such as Deuteronomy 32.25, Psalms 148:12, and 2Chronicles 36.17 are referenced. Lastly, the passages in which it is claimed there are specific references of בְּתוּלָה to women who are not virgins are Joel 1:8, Esther 2:17, and Ezekiel 23:3, and the following interpretations are offered, respectively:

In **Joel 1:8**, **a virgin** [בְּתוּלָה] is called upon to lament over the death of her husband. The word used for husband in this verse is בַּעַל (***BA'<u>al</u>***), a term they claim is never used of a bridegroom, only of a "**full husband**". In other words, the בְּתוּלָה in this passage cannot be a virgin since she was married.

In **Esther 2:17**, the girls are called **virgins** [בְּתוּלוֹת] <u>after</u> spending a night with the king.

In the parable of **Ezekiel 23:3**, the “virgin breasts” of the sisters, ***AhoLAH*** and ***AholiBAH***, were being handled in harlotry, leaving the impression that the notion of a virgin is quite removed.

✡ **Jewish response:** The claims about Esther 2:17 and Ezekiel 23:3 are easily refuted in terms of the Hebrew language and the context of the passages. The response to the claim regarding Joel 1:8 is more involved, though it is effective and conclusive.

In order to counter the claim about **Esther 2:17**, it is necessary to consider all four applications of the term בְּתוּלָה in the Scroll of Esther, which are found at Esther 2:2,3,17,19. The meaning of בְּתוּלָה at Esther 2:2,3 is not in question – it clearly refers to **a virgin**. The first case in question, then, is the following:

> **Esther 2:17 - The king loved Esther more than all the women, and she found more favor and kindness before him than all the other virgins [בְּתוּלֹת]; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen in place of Vashti.**

Nowhere is it stated in Esther 2:17 that those other **virgins** had already spent a night with the king. Being **a virgin** was the pre-requisite for being placed in the king’s harem. From that point on, it was merely a beauty contest. The Jewish tradition was that a woman would remain **a virgin** for up to one year following her betrothal. There is no reason to assume, nor is there any indication in the entire Scroll of Esther, that Esther spent a night with the king before he named her and she became the queen. In fact, Esther 2:20 supports this conclusion:

> **Esther 2:19-20 – (19) And when the virgins [בְּתוּלֹת] were gathered together the second time, and Mordochai sat at the king’s gate, (20) Esther still told nothing of her kindred or her people as Mordochai had instructed her; for Esther continued to obey Mordochai, just as when she was reared by him.”**

Clearly, utilizing Esther 2:17 as an example that בְּתוּלָה can be used to refer to a woman who is not a virgin is an error made from a lack of knowledge and understanding of the Hebrew language and Jewish customs and traditions. Finally, in Esther 2:19 a second roundup of new virgins for the king’s harem is mentioned. Nothing in the text indicates these women were "recycled virgins" who had already spent a night with the king.

Ezekiel 23:3, too, is an example that demonstrates both a flawed contextual interpretation as well as a lack of knowledge and understanding of the Hebrew language by Christian missionaries:

> **Ezekiel 23:3 – They indulged in promiscuity in Egypt; they were promiscuous in their youth. There their bosoms were pressed and there their breasts of their virginity [דַּדֵּי בְּתוּלֵיהֶן (*daDEI b*[e]*tuleiHEN*)] were squeezed.**

The nation is likened to prostitutes, whose infidelity earns them the contempt of all, including their paramours. Israel's two branches, Judah and Ephraim [also often referred to as Israel], began as a united nation in Egypt. But even while still in Egypt, they were promiscuous, as described through this metaphor, i.e., they picked up the idolatrous practices of Egypt. Later, the two branches, Judah and Ephraim, each followed the idolatrous ways of its neighbors and fell away from obeying the Torah's Commandments. It is important to note, however, that in all three places in this chapter where the graphic description of squeezing the sisters' **breasts of their virginity** [דַּדֵּי בְּתוּלֵיהֶן] is depicted, it mentions that it was done in their youth, i.e., their first sexual experiences (until that point they were indeed **virgins**) occurred in Egypt, which is where they "lost their virginity", metaphorically speaking. In other words, the expression דַּדֵּי בְּתוּלֵיהֶן refers to their youth just prior to losing their innocence. Moreover, it should also be noted here that the noun בְּתוּלָה is not used in this verse. Rather, the noun בְּתוּלִים (***b*^{e}*tuLIM***), **hymen** (the sign of virginity), is used – a noun that appears ten times in the Hebrew Bible in various forms. Following that first "sexual" experience, the notion of virginity is far removed and, as one reads on in Ezekiel, the term is no longer used beyond that first time in reference to ***AholiBAH***, and then once more, at Ezekiel 23:8, in reference to her sister ***AhoLAH***'s youth.

The last case, **Joel 1:8**, is a bit more intricate and, therefore, requires a more elaborate explanation:

> **Joel 1:8 - Lament/wail like a virgin [כִּבְתוּלָה (*ki'vtuLAH*)] girded with a sackcloth [mourning] for the husband of [*or*, man of] her youth [עַל-בַּעַל נְעוּרֶיהָ (*AL-BA'al n*^{e}*UREIha*)].**

In the translation above, the expression "**man of**" is shown in addition to the common expression "**husband of**" to indicate a specific application, unique to this verse in the entire Hebrew Bible but appropriate in this instance. The Hebrew noun בַּעַל (***BA'al***), which normally means **husband**, appears here in a possessive construct, which gives it the meanings, **husband of …**, **man of …**, or **owner of ….**[6] The missionary's claim that the noun **בַּעַל** is used only of a "**full husband**" and never of a "**betrothed bridegroom**" is simply untrue.

According to the ancient custom, the Jewish marriage process consisted of two separate events. The first event was אֵרוּשִׂין (***eirusIN***), **a betrothal** {a term that does not appear in the Hebrew Bible, but is a later derivative of the Biblical root verb אֵרַשׂ (***eiRAS***), **[to] betroth**}, which is when the couple

[6] In general, and there are numerous examples of this in the Hebrew Bible, when the noun בַּעַל appears in a possessive construct, בַּעַל-, the full expression may take on various meanings, depending on what the other component is.

became "engaged". Betrothal could last for a period of up to one year, during which time the man generally got himself established in a position that would enable him to support his wife and future family, and during which time the couple did not cohabitate. At the end of the betrothal period came נִשּׂוּאִין (***nisu'IN***), the actual **marriage** {a term that does not appear in the Hebrew Bible, but is a later derivative of the Biblical root verb נָשָׂא (***nasA***), **[to] marry**}, took place, which is when the marriage was consummated by way of the first sanctioned sexual contact. The בְּתוּלָה in Joel 1:8 is grieving for her man who died (for some unknown reason) before their marriage was consummated. This man was the "husband-to-be" who had the claim to, i.e., who was the **owner of …** [בַּעַל־] her virginity, had he lived. In other words, he owned the right to (take) her virginity [remember these were Biblical times!]. To attach a dual meaning of "a non-virgin" to בְּתוּלָה from this verse is simply an act of desperation.

The salient point in Joel 1:8 is that the "**… virgin lamenting for the husband of her youth …**" is a "married virgin" (a betrothed woman who has not been with a man sexually) whose betrothed husband (from her youth) died (for some unspecified reason) before the marriage was consummated with the נִשּׂוּאִין, i.e., before she had her first sexual intercourse with him.

Where would a "married virgin", such as the one in Joel 1:8, be **in her youth** [בִּנְעוּרֶיהָ (***bin'uREha***)]? The answer can be found in the following passages:

> **<u>Numbers 30:4,17</u> – (4) And if a woman makes a vow to the Lord, or imposes a prohibition [upon herself] while in her father's house, in her youth [בִּנְעוּרֶיהָ], (17) These are the statutes which the Lord commanded Moses regarding a man and his wife; between a father and his daughter, in her youth [בִּנְעוּרֶיהָ], while in her father's house.**

A "married virgin", such as the one mentioned in Joel 1:8, would be found in her father's house in her youth! Additional support for this paradigm is found in several places in the Hebrew Bible:

> **<u>Deuteronomy 22:23-24</u> - (23) If a girl who is a virgin [בְּתוּלָה] is betrothed [מְאֹרָשָׂה (*m^eorasAH*)] to a husband [אִישׁ (*ISH*)], and a man [אִישׁ] finds her in the city, and lies with her; (24) Then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them with stones that they die; the girl, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man [הָאִישׁ (*ha'ISH*)], because he has humbled his neighbor's wife [אֵשֶׁת רֵעֵהוּ (*EIshet re'EIhu*)]; so you shall put away evil from among you.**

Note in the above passage that the "fiancée" of the betrothed virgin is referred to as "a husband" [Deut 22:23; one of the meanings of אִישׁ], and that she is referred to as her fiancée's "wife" [Deut 22:24; one of the meanings of אִשָּׁה

(*ISHAH*)]. From this passage it is clear that the בְּתוּלָה in Joel 1:8 is **a virgin** in the strictest sense of the word, i.e., a betrothed woman who has not had sexual intercourse with a man.

Christian missionaries have argued with this interpretation of Deuteronomy 22:23-24 on the basis that the translations of אִישׁ and אִשָּׁה are subjective, even though the context is clear. This argument is easily defeated by quoting this passage from the KJV:

> **Deuteronomy 22:23-24(KJV) - (23) If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; (24) Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you.**

There is another way to argue, using the Hebrew Bible, the validity of the Jewish perspective, that the בְּתוּלָה in Joel 1:8 is, indeed, **a virgin**. It is not even necessary to venture out of this chapter (Joel 1) to demonstrate the correct context, since it is part of the metaphorical description of the prophecy of the devastating plague of locusts.

A careful analysis of Joel 1 reveals the following observations:

- According to Joel 1:5, the drunks *will not get to taste the fine wine*:

  > **Joel 1:5 - Awaken, you drunkards, and weep; and wail, all you wine drinkers, about the good wine, for it has been cut off from your mouth.**

- According to Joel 1:7, *the vine and fig tree that were planted and have grown will not yield the fruits*:

  > **Joel 1:7 – It [the locust] has laid my vine waste, and splintered my fig tree; it has stripped its bark, and thrown it down; its branches have turned white.**

- According to Joel 1:10, *the grain, wine, and oil will not be consumed*:

  > **Joel 1:10 - The field is wasted, the land mourns; for the grain is wasted; the new wine is dried up, the oil languishes.**

- According to Joel 1:11, *there will be no harvest*:

  > **Joel 1:11 - Be ashamed, O plowmen; wail, O vine dressers over wheat and over barley, for the harvest of the field has been lost;**

- Joel 1:12 is a reprise of the same theme yet again:

  > **Joel 1:12 - The vines have dried up, and the fig trees have been cut off; the pomegranates, also the date palms and the apples, all the trees of the field have dried up, for joy has dried up from the people.**

- Joel 1:13 takes this to the next level:

  > **Joel 1:13 - Gird yourselves and mourn, you priests; wail, you ministers of the altar; come, sleep in sackcloth, you ministers of my God, for the meal offering and the libations have been withheld from the house of your God.**

The epitome of man's relationship with God, the communion with God via the meal offerings and libations, will not occur without the harvest. The symbolic parallels with Joel 1:8 are striking.

The message is clear: The "second phase" of the process in each case will not be realized in parallel to the lamenting virgin whose betrothed husband, בַּעַל נְעוּרֶיהָ (**husband of her youth**), had died before their marriage was consummated. Scripture validates itself right here!

Two additional examples of parallel metaphoric passages support this interpretation of Joel 1:8 as shown:

> **<u>Deuteronomy 20:6-7</u> – (6) And who is the man [הָאִישׁ] that has planted a vineyard, and has not used the fruit thereof? let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man use the fruit thereof. (7) And who is the man [הָאִישׁ] who has betrothed [אֵרַשׂ] a wife [אִשָּׁה], and has not taken her? let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her.**
>
> **<u>Deuteronomy 28:30-31</u> – (30) You shall betroth [תְּאָרֵשׂ (*t*[e]*ARES*)] a wife [אִשָּׁה], and another man shall lie with her; you shall build a house, and you shall not live in it; you shall plant a vineyard, and shall not gather its grapes. (31) Your ox shall be slain before your eyes, and you shall not eat of it; your ass shall be violently taken away from before your face, and shall not be restored to you; your sheep shall be given to your enemies, and you shall have none to rescue them.**

The structure of the Joel 1 passages clearly parallels the two-phase Jewish marriage custom, a paradigm that is supported by similar passages from elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. The Prophet Joel indicates in this way that his application of the noun בְּתוּלָה in Joel 1:8 means exactly what it has always (i.e., exclusively!) meant in Hebrew (both Biblical and Modern) – **a virgin**, a woman who has not had sexual intercourse with a man.

<u>Conclusion</u>: The claim that בְּתוּלָה, as used in the Hebrew Bible, is not the exclusive term for "a virgin" cannot be supported from within the Hebrew Bible and, in fact, is a false claim.

E. Other Missionary Claims

Christian missionaries use many other arguments to try and defend Isaiah 7:14 as a "proof text" for the "Virgin Birth" of Jesus. Some are summarized below.

1. <u>Missionary Claim</u>: To rule out a "Virgin Birth" is to limit the power of the Creator

- ✝ **Christian claim:** A persistent Christian missionary may attempt to challenge the Jewish perspective by claiming that, by ruling out the possibility that the female in Isaiah 7:14 was a virgin who conceived of

God and remained a virgin (***virgo intacta***), one places limitations on what God can do.

✡ **Jewish response:** The Sages of the Talmud recognized the possibility that a woman can conceive with her virginity remaining intact, but they declared that it can occur only by means of normal fertilization.[7]

Jewish polemicists of the medieval period, who feared the retributions that could result from open discussion of this subject, did not attack the doctrine of the "Virgin Birth" directly. Rather, they used philosophical arguments to reject the idea that God could incarnate by impregnating a virgin and fathering an offspring who was God Himself. The noted Jewish polemicist and geographer, Rabbi Abraham Farissol (1452-1528) wrote:

> **We cannot deny the possibility that God, may He be blessed,, could create a creation in a virgin, even one whom no man has known, For He created everything out of nothing. Rather, we deny that there was a need for incarnation.**[8]

<u>Conclusion</u>: Given the accepted Jewish view of God, which includes His incorporeal and omnipotent nature, it is not a question of *whether* God is able to affect a "Virgin Birth". The issue is the need for self-incarnation, the realization of which is excluded by God's incorporeal nature.

2. <u>Missionary Claim</u>: הָעַלְמָה is rendered παρθενος **(parthenos) in the Septuagint (LXX)**

✝ **Christian claim:** Christian missionaries argue that the Septuagint (LXX), allegedly an ancient translation into Greek of the Hebrew Bible by Jewish scholars, has the Hebrew term הָעַלְמָה at Isaiah 7:14 rendered as παρθενος □□in Greek, meaning **a virgin**. Surely, they argue, the Rabbis who translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek would know how to correctly translate this term.

✡ **Jewish response:** The Jewish response is based on extant evidence, which has convinced scholars (of all persuasions) that today's LXX is not the original Septuagint, which was a mid-3rd century B.C.E translation into Greek of <u>only the Torah</u> (the Five Books of Moses), commissioned by King Ptolemy II of Egypt, and which was carried out by 72 of the most learned, bi-lingual Jewish scholars of the time. Rather, the LXX is a Church-rendered Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. The evidence includes:

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[7] Babylonian Talmud, Tractate <u>*HagiGAH*</u>, Folios 14b-15a.

[8] From Daniel J. Lasker, <u>*Jewish Philosophical Polemics Against Christianity in the Middle Ages*</u>, p. 153, KTAV Publishing (1977)

- Historical accounts (the writings of Josephus and St. Jerome, the Letter of Aristeas)
- Scriptural items (statements in the Talmud, errors of omission in the LXX)
- Linguistic data (comparative linguistic analysis of the Greek in the LXX vis-à-vis the Greek spoken in the 3rd century B.C.E)
- Inconsistencies in the way the Greek word παρθενος is translated in the KJV (e.g., at Gen 24:43 it is rendered **the virgin**, while at Gen 38:24 it is rendered **the maid**, so that it does not exclusively mean **a virgin**)
- The Church-rendered LXX defeats the standard Christian argument as well. The claim is that, at Isaiah 7:14, הָעַלְמָה is translated into Greek as παρθενος, which means **a virgin**. Yet, the LXX is not consistent in all its translation of this noun. The LXX renditions for the seven instances of עַלְמָה in the Hebrew Bible are shown in Table III.E.1-1.

<u>Table III.E.1-1</u> – LXX translations of עַלְמָה

Reference	Greek Translation in LXX*
Genesis 24:43; Isaiah 7:14	παρθενος (***parthenos***)
Exodus 2:8; Psalms 68:26 [67:26 in LXX] Proverbs 30:19; Song of Songs 1:3, 6:8	νεανισ (***neanis***)

* Nouns are shown in "root" form, i.e., singular and without prepositions

- According to Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott's (L&S), *<u>An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon</u>*, the noun παρθενος may take on the following meanings: **a maid**, **a maiden**, **a virgin**, **a girl**. The noun νεανισ is shown in the same source to have the following meanings: **a young woman**, **a girl**, **a maiden**. The application in the Church-rendered LXX of two distinctly different terms to the Hebrew noun עַלְמָה, rules out any proof that the Greek term exclusively means "a virgin". [The LXX rendition of the masculine counter-part of עַלְמָה, namely, עֶלֶם, is νεανισκος (*neaniskos*), which, according to L&S, has the following meanings: **a youth**, **a young man**. Clearly, there is no definite indication of virginity in these terms.
- According to the LXX, Genesis 34:3 also defeats the claim that παρθενος is used exclusively to describe "a virgin". Dinah, who was raped by Sh'chem, is referred to as παρθενος <u>after</u> being raped, which refutes the claim on its exclusive use for identifying "a virgin".

<u>Conclusion</u>: This claim is false on three accounts. First, the LXX is a Christian, not Jewish, translation of the Hebrew Bible. Second, the two different LXX translations of עַלְמָה demonstrate that the Greek term παρθενος is not used exclusively in references to "a virgin". Finally, the LXX uses παρθενος **to describe a woman after she was raped.**

3. <u>Missionary Claim</u>: Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) cognate languages support the use of עַלְמָה over בְּתוּלָה to describe "a virgin"

✞ **Christian Claim:** This Christian missionary argument utilizes the terminology found in several of the ANE Cognate Languages (Akkadian, Egyptian, Sumerian, Ugaritic, and others) to justify the claim that עַלְמָה is just as acceptable as, and probably even more accurate than בְּתוּלָה, for conveying the idea that a young female is "a virgin".[9]

✡ **Jewish Response:** References to such extra-Biblical sources are simply diversions that have no place here. Professor Gordon's work on this topic was studied and analyzed. Of particular interest are his comments on a related Ugaritic poem,[10] which lead to the following observations:

- The Christian analysis quotes only a small portion of the full analysis by Professor Gordon. When the entire published note is taken in its proper context, together with the text of the poem in question, the claimed inference is, at best, a stretch of the true meaning.
- Given Isaiah's stance against idolatry, the use by the Prophet of terminology from a language and poem that represented an idolatrous culture is rather doubtful.

Christian missionaries typically adhere to religious fundamentalism, which generally includes the notion of ***sola scriptura***, Latin for **by scripture alone**, the idea of the singular authority of scripture. In other words, scripture (the Bible) is the only infallible rule to be used for deciding issues of faith and practices that involve doctrines. Yet, in order to defend their interpretation of Isaiah 7:14, missionaries are prepared to reach outside the bounds of their Bible and rely on the ANE languages of pagan nations. They cannot have it both ways!

While Judaism rejects the concept of *sola scriptura*, in the case of Isaiah 7:14 there is no need to go outside the Hebrew Bible to demonstrate the validity of the Jewish position. Using *Scripture to interpret Scripture* is a powerful analytical tool for supporting the Jewish interpretation against the claims made by Christian missionaries.

III. Summary

The detailed analysis of Isaiah 7:14 presented in this 2-part essay demonstrates, both grammatically and contextually, that a valid connection cannot be established between the doctrine of the "Virgin Birth", a foundational doctrine of Christianity, and Isaiah 7:14. This verse from the Hebrew Bible has been mistranslated and claimed, first by the author of the Gospel of Matthew, and later by many others, as a

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[9] This claim is based on a published note by the late Professor Cyrus H. Gordon, *'Almah in Isaiah 7:14*, Journal of Bible and Religion, p. 106, Vol. XXI, No. 2 (April 1953)

[10] See *Exposing A Missionary Deception* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/j4jexposed.pdf. [A side note: In a private communication to a third party, Professor Gordon, who has since passed away, voiced his dismay at how Christian missionaries were misapplying his published note on the subject, and he confirmed that their conclusions are erroneous.]

“messianic prophecy” from the Prophet Isaiah that was fulfilled in the alleged “Virgin Birth” of Jesus.

The claim that Isaiah 7:14 is the so-called "proof text" of the "Virgin Birth" of Jesus is merely and attempt to retrofit Christology into the Hebrew Bible. This verse is part of an historical event, described in detail in the seventh chapter of the Book of Isaiah, something that has already occurred and cannot apply to an event claimed to have taken place some seven and one half centuries later in history.

ISAIAH 9:5-6[6-7][1] – IS IT MESSIANIC OR HISTORICAL?[2]

I. INTRODUCTION

The passage Isaiah 9:5-6[6-7] is an important "proof text" in the portfolio of Christian missionaries, one that is claimed to foretell the advent of Christianity's Messiah, Jesus.

A detailed analysis of the Hebrew text of Isaiah 9:5-6 within its proper context demonstrates how this passage describes historical events that occurred during the era in which these words were spoken by Isaiah, and is not a messianic prophecy.

II. REVIEW AND COMPARISON OF ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF IS 9:5-6[6-7]

Table II-1 displays side-by-side English renditions and the Hebrew text of the passage Isaiah 9:5-6[6-7]. The King James Version (KJV) translation is shown with pointers to cross-referenced passages in the New Testament. [These referential notations are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB). The corresponding passages quoted below the table are from the KJV.]

[1] The passage Isaiah 9:5-6 appears in Christian Bibles as Isaiah 9:6-7, hence the notation Isaiah 9:5-6[6-7] will be used when appropriate.

[2] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:

- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "h̲"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

Table II-1 – **Isaiah 9:5-6[6-7]**

Isaiah	King James Version Translation	Isaiah	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	ישעיה
9:6	For unto us a child is born,(i) unto us a son is given:(ii) and the government shall be upon his shoulder:(iii) and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.	9:5 Version A	For a child has been born to us, a son has been given to us, and the authority was placed upon his shoulder, and [He, the] Wondrous Adviser, Mighty God, Eternal Father/Patron, called his name: Ruler of Peace;	כִּי־יֶלֶד יֻלַּד־לָנוּ בֵּן נִתַּן־לָנוּ וַתְּהִי הַמִּשְׂרָה עַל־שִׁכְמוֹ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ פֶּלֶא יוֹעֵץ אֵל גִּבּוֹר אֲבִי־עַד שַׂר־שָׁלוֹם׃	ט,ה
		9:5 Version B	For a child has been born to us, a son has been given to us, and the authority was placed upon his shoulder, and [he] called his name: Wondrous Adviser, Mighty God [*or*, Mighty Hero], Eternal Patron, Ruler of Peace;		
9:7	Of the increase of [his] government and peace there shall be no end,(iv) upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.	9:6	for the increase of the authority and for peace without end, on David's throne and on his kingdom, to establish it and to support it with justice and with righteousness; from now and to eternity, the zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall accomplish this.	לְםַרְבֵּה [קי' לְמַרְבֵּה] הַמִּשְׂרָה וּלְשָׁלוֹם אֵין־קֵץ עַל־כִּסֵּא דָוִד וְעַל־מַמְלַכְתּוֹ לְהָכִין אֹתָהּ וּלְסַעֲדָהּ בְּמִשְׁפָּט וּבִצְדָקָה מֵעַתָּה וְעַד־עוֹלָם קִנְאַת יהוה צְבָאוֹת תַּעֲשֶׂה־זֹּאת׃	ט,ו

(i) Luke 2:11(KJV) – For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.
(ii) John 3:16(KJV) – For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believethin him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
(iii) Matthew 28:18(KJV) – And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.
1Corinthians 15:25(KJV) – For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.
(iv) Luke 1:32-33(KJV) – (32) He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: (33) And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Two valid alternate Jewish translations are provided for Isaiah 9:5, which reflect the two common interpretations of this verse by the Jewish Sages, and these will be dealt with later in the essay. The most significant differences between the KJV and Jewish translations are found in the first verse, Isaiah 9:5[6]. One difference is that the Hebrew text, in both versions, utilizes verbs that are conjugated in the past tense, and which describe a sequence of events that has already taken place, while the corresponding verbs in KJV translation are conjugated the present and future tenses, thereby describing events that are contemporary and also still to come. Another important difference between the KJV and Jewish translations of the first

verse is in the list of names/titles. The Jewish translation lists four names/titles, none of which is modified with a definite article *the* (as in the Hebrew text). The Christian translation lists five, the first two of which are split out of the first Hebrew one and are without a definite article, and each of the last three is capitalized and has a definite article.

With the exception of a subtle difference in the respective translations of the second verse, Isaiah 9:6[7], other differences are, in general, insignificant with respect to the context of the passage. Both the Hebrew text and the Jewish translation of this verse capture the message – the explanation of the series of names/titles from the previous verse – in one sentence. Yet, the KJV translators start a new sentence with Isaiah 9:6[7], which removes the continuity from the previous verse, and then they break this verse into two separate sentences, which results in an abstruse redirection of the focus in order to support their translation of the previous verse, as will be demonstrated later.

III. OVERVIEW OF CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH INTERPRETATIONS OF IS 9:5-6[6-7]

A. The Christian Interpretation

In the common Christian perspective, this passage is a messianic prophecy that foretells the birth of Jesus, his divinity, and his destined mission as the promised King/Messiah. Though the authors of the New Testament never explicitly cite any portion of these two verses, Christians will often point to the passages shown under Table II-1, which are hindsight references inserted by the translators, not by the authors, as evidence that the prophecy in Isaiah 9:5-6[6-7] was fulfilled.

Only a summary of the Christian interpretation is provided here. More complete and detailed descriptions by well-known Christian commentators, such as Matthew Henry and Jamieson, Faussett & Brown JF&B) are outside the scope of this essay.

B. The Jewish Interpretation

This, too, is only a summary of the Jewish interpretation. A detailed analysis and commentary will follow.

Isaiah 9:5-6 *is not* a messianic prophecy according to the Jewish perspective. The correct context of this passage is that it describes events that had already taken place in Jewish history, namely, the birth and naming of this particular child (believed to be Hezekiah, the son of King A<u>h</u>az), and a prophecy concerning his future mission (which was fulfilled). Hezekiah's role was to lift Judah from the degenerate conditions into which it had sunk, and to lead the indestructible faithful "Remnant of Israel". According to one interpretation, this passage speaks of the wonders performed by God for Hezekiah as King of Judah, and in it, the Prophet expresses his praise of God for sparing Hezekiah and his kingdom from demise at the hands of *San<u>h</u>eriv* and his army, who besieged Jerusalem.

IV. ARE THESE EVENTS HISTORICAL OR IS THIS A MESSIANIC PROPHECY?

A comparison of the Christian and Jewish perspectives on Isaiah 9:5-6[6-7] shows that both cannot be valid simultaneously. The salient question is: "*Which of these interpretations is consistent with the Hebrew Bible (and with the historical record)?*"

A. Hebrew Linguistic Analysis

As noted above, the KJV translation of this passage shows significant deviation from the Hebrew text, as reflected in both Jewish translations. Simple word studies are used to facilitate the analysis of these differences

1. Verbs & Tenses

The Hebrew text in the opening phrases of Isaiah 9:5 utilizes verbs that are conjugated in the past tense, while the KJV translation of this verse, which is Isaiah 9:6 in Christian Bibles, utilizes a combination of present and future tenses in the corresponding phrases.

The first verb that appears in the verse is יֻלַּד (***yuLAD***). This is a conjugation of the root verb ילד in the 3rd-person, singular, masculine, past tense, in the ***pu'AL*** stem, the passive intensive verb form, giving it the meaning **has been born** or **was born**, depending on the context of the passage in which it appears.[3] The KJV renders יֻלַּד at Isaiah 9:6 as **is born**, in the present tense, which conflicts with the Hebrew as well as with the Jewish translation. Of the 15 identical instances (in terms of both spelling and vowel markings) of the term יֻלַּד in the Hebrew Bible, only one appears in the Book of Isaiah – at Isaiah 9:5. Of the remaining 14 instances, on seven occasions (Genesis 10:21,25, 35:26, 46:22,27, 51:50, 1Chronicles 1:19), the KJV correctly renders the term as **were born**, where the references are to more than one son (in Biblical Hebrew verbs conjugated in the singular are, at times, applied to plural nouns). These cases are excluded from the analysis since they concern a plurality and not an individual, which leaves a total of eight cases for the analysis, as shown in Table IV.A.1-1.

[3] Depending on the particular stem the root verb ילד is conjugated, it takes on such meanings as **to give birth**, **to be born**, and **to beget** (i.e., to father children).

Table IV.A.1-1 – **The term יֻלַּד**

Term	#	Reference	Jewish Translation	KJV Translation
יֻלַּד	8	Genesis 4:26	was born	was born
		2Samuel 21:20	was born	was born
		Isaiah 9:5[6]	**has been born**	**is born**
		Jeremiah 20:15	has been born	is born
		Psalms 87:4	was born	was born
		Psalms 87:5	was born	was born
		Psalms 87:6	was born	was born
		Ruth 4:17	has been born	is born

While the Jewish renditions cast all eight occurrences in some form of the past tense, the KJV renditions are inconsistent – in the past tense on five occasions, and in the present tense on three occasions (including Isaiah 9:6).

The next verb that appears in the verse is נִתַּן (***niTAN***). This is a conjugation of the root verb נתן in the 3rd-person, singular, masculine, past tense, in the ***nif'AL*** stem, the reflexive and passive verb form, giving it the meaning **has been given** or **was given**, depending on the context of the passage in which it appears.[4] The KJV renders נִתַּן at Isaiah 9:6 as **is given**, in the present tense, which conflicts with the Hebrew as well as with the Jewish translation. Of the 14 identical instances of the term נִתַּן in the Hebrew Bible, two appear in the Book of Isaiah – at Isaiah 9:5 and at Isaiah 35:2 – an inadequate sample from which to draw conclusions. Therefore, all 14 cases are included in the analysis, as shown in Table IV.A.1-2.

Table IV.A.1-2 – **The term נִתַּן**

Term	#	Reference	Jewish Translation	KJV Translation
נִתַּן	14	Leviticus 19:20	had … been given	[was …] given
		Numbers 26:62	was given	was given
		Joshua 24:33	was given	was given
		Isaiah 9:5[6]	**has been given**	**is given**
		Isaiah 35:2	has been given	shall be given
		Jeremiah 13:20	was given	was given
		Jeremiah 51:55	was uttered	is uttered
		Ezekiel 15:4	were given	is cast
		Ezekiel 16:34	was … given	is … given
		Ezekiel 32:25	was given	is put
		Ecclesiastes 10:6	was set	is set
		Esther 4:8	was given	was given
		Esther 6:8	[was] placed	is set
		2Chronicles 34:16	was given	was committed

[4] Depending on the particular stem the root verb נתן is conjugated, it takes on such meanings as **to give**, **to present**, and **to be given**, **to be presented**.

While the Jewish renditions cast all occurrences in some form of the past tense, the KJV renditions are inconsistent – in the past tense on six occasions, in the present tense on seven occasions (including Isaiah 9:6), and once in the future tense.

The next verb that appears in the verse is וַתְּהִי (***va't****e****HI***). This term is a combination of the conjugated verb, תְּהִי (***t****e****HI***) and a special form, ־וַ (***va-***), of the conjunction ־וְ (***v****e****-***) [the latter being called וָו הַחִבּוּר (***VAV-ha'hiBUR***), **the conjunctive-vav**, which is the preposition **and**]. The verb תְּהִי is a poetic form of the conjugation of the root verb היה in the 3rd-person, singular, feminine, future tense, in the ***pa'AL/QAL*** stem, the simple verb form, which translates as **[she/it] will be**.[5] [Note: Since the Hebrew language has no neuter gender, all nouns are either masculine or feminine, and the neuter gender must be inferred from the context]. Together with the conjunction ־וְ, **and**, this would then be **and [she/it] shall be**. However, as noted above, the conjunction appears in a special form called in Hebrew וָו הַהִפּוּךְ (***VAV-ha'hiPUCH***), **the conversive-vav**, which, in addition to functioning as the conjunction **and**, also reverses the tense of the verb to which it is prefixed. In other words, if the verb is in the past tense, it is changed to the future tense, and vice versa. Putting all this together, the verb וַתְּהִי means **and [she/it] was [placed]**, i.e., a verb conjugated in the 3rd-person, singular, feminine, past tense. The KJV renders וַתְּהִי at Isaiah 9:6 as **and … [it] shall be [placed]**, in the future tense, which conflicts with the Hebrew as well as with the Jewish translation. Of the 85 identical instances of וַתְּהִי in the Hebrew Bible, five appear in the Book of Isaiah – at Isaiah 5:25, 9:5, 23:3, 29:11,13. These five cases comprise the sample selected for the analysis, as shown in Table IV.A.1-3.

Table IV.A.1-3 – The term וַתְּהִי

Term	#	Reference	Jewish Translation	KJV Translation
וַתְּהִי	5	Isaiah 5:25	and … were*	and … were
		Isaiah 9:5[6]	**and … was [placed]**	**and … [it] shall be [placed]**
		Isaiah 23:3	and she became	and she is
		Isaiah 29:11	and … has been	and … is become**
		Isaiah 29:13	and … has been	and … is

* - The Hebrew is actually in the singular, which would literally translate as **and [it] was…**

** - The context here is clearly **has become**, i.e., it is something that has taken place

While the Jewish renditions cast all of the occurrences in some form of the past tense, the KJV renditions are inconsistent – twice in the past tense, twice in the present tense, and once in the future tense, at Isaiah 9:6.

[5] Depending on the particular stem the root verb היה is conjugated, it takes on such meanings as **to be**, **to become**.

The last verb that appears in the verse is וַיִּקְרָא (*va'yiqRA*). As in the previous case, this term, too, is a combination of the conjugated verb יִקְרָא (*yiqRA*) and the special conjunction וַ־, **the conversive-vav** [וָו הַהִפּוּךְ], the net effect of which is the addition of the preposition **and** to the verb and reverse its tense. The verb יִקְרָא is the conjugation of the root verb קרא in the 3rd-person, singular, masculine, future tense, in the ***pa'AL/QAL*** stem, the simple verb form, which translates as **[he] will call**.[6] Thus, the combination וַיִּקְרָא means **and [he] called**, where the future tense has been reversed to the past tense. The KJV renders וַיִּקְרָא at Isaiah 9:6 as **shall be called**, in the future tense, and in a passive form, which conflicts with the Hebrew as well as with the Jewish translation. Of the 205 identical instances of וַיִּקְרָא in the Hebrew Bible, four appear in the Book of Isaiah – at Isaiah 9:5, 21:8, 22:12, 36:13. These four cases comprise the sample selected for the analysis, as shown in Table IV.A.1-4.

Table IV.A.1-4 – The term וַיִּקְרָא

Term	#	Reference	Jewish Translation	KJV Translation
וַיִּקְרָא	4	**Isaiah 9:5[6]**	**and [he] called**	**and … shall be called**
		Isaiah 21:8	and … called	and he cried
		Isaiah 22:12	and … called	and … did call
		Isaiah 36:13	and [he] called	and cried

While the Jewish renditions cast all of the occurrences in some form of the past tense, the KJV renditions are inconsistent – in the past tense on three occasions, and once in the future tense, at Isaiah 9:6.

The results of the above analysis of the tenses in Isaiah 9:5[6] demonstrate the consistency of the Jewish translations and the inconsistency of the KJV translations.

Sidebar Note: Some Christian missionaries attempt to justify the present tense translations commonly found in Christian Bibles by pointing to a respected Jewish translation, the *Soncino Press* translation of the Hebrew Bible, in which Isaiah 9:5 is translated as:[7]

> **Isaiah 9:5(Soncino) – For a child is born unto us, A son is given unto us; And the government is upon his shoulder; And his name is called Pele-joez-el-gibbor-Abi-ad-sar-shalom;**

They attempt to use this particular translation as evidence that refutes the consensus about the verbs being conjugated in the past tense. What these missionaries leave

[6] Depending on the particular stem the root verb קרא is conjugated, it takes on such meanings as **to call, to name, to read, to be called, to be named**, **to be read**.
[7] *Soncino Books of the Bible – Isaiah*, p. 44, The Soncino Press (1983)

out of their so-called evidence is the commentary on this verse by the *Soncino* translators. Here is the relevant portion of the commentary:[8]

> **5. *a child*. The verse has been given a Christological interpretation by the Church, but modern non-Jewish exegetes agree that a contemporary person is intended. The Talmud and later Jewish commentators understood the allusion to be the son of Ahaz, viz. Hezekiah.**
>
> ***is born . . . is given*. Better, in agreement with the Hebrew, 'has been born . . . has been given.'**

Aware of what Christian translators have done with this passage, the Soncino translators specifically address this in the commentary by pointing out that the past, not present, tense conjugation, is in better agreement with the Hebrew. This refutes the missionary claim.

2. Names/Titles

The last verb in Isaiah 9:5[6] is followed by a series of names/titles. This set of names/titles appealed to Christian translators as an easy target for editing to support the Christological message that was being developed for this passage. As shown in Table II-1 above, this series of names/titles may be understood in two different ways, thereby giving rise to the two versions shown for the Jewish translation. At this point in the analysis, only the linguistic aspects of these names/titles are investigated. The particular applications of these names/titles are investigated in Section VI.B below.

The first name/title is פֶּלֶא יוֹעֵץ (***PE**le yo'**E̲TS***), **Wondrous Adviser**, which appears in the Hebrew Bible only once – at Isaiah 9:5. Consequently, a comparative analysis, as was done for the verbs, is not possible. In the KJV rendition, this name/title is separated into two entities – **Wonderful** and **Counsellor**. Although a comparative analysis is not possible, the rules of Hebrew grammar still apply and, according to which, this split may not be done.[9] While the two terms can stand on their own as nouns, they take on different meanings as such. The noun פֶּלֶא (***PE**le*), which derives from the root verb פלא, means **a wonder** or **a marvel**, as may be seen in its two applications, in the singular form, in the Book of Isaiah – at Isaiah 25:1 as פֶּלֶא, **a wonder**, and at Isaiah 29:14 as וָפֶלֶא (***va'FE**le*), **and a wonder**. The noun יוֹעֵץ (***yo'E̲TS***), which derives from the root verb יעץ, means **an adviser** or **a counselor**, as may be seen from its two applications, in the singular form, in the Book of Isaiah – at Isaiah 3:3 as וְיוֹעֵץ (***v**e**yo'E̲TS***), **and an adviser** or **and a counselor**, and at Isaiah 41:28 as יוֹעֵץ, **an adviser** or **a**

[8] *Soncino Books of the Bible - Isaiah*, Rev. Dr. A. Cohen (Editor), p. 44; Soncino Press (1950).
[9] Moreover, the fact that each the following three names/titles contains two elements, and that other derivatives of the two root verbs פלא and יעץ are used together at Isaiah 25:1, 28:29, supports the notion that this name/title also consists of two elements, as reflected in both Jewish translations.

counselor. These terms and their respective renditions in the KJV are shown in Table IV.A.2-1.

<u>Table IV.A.2-1</u> – **The name/title פֶּלֶא יוֹעֵץ and its components פֶּלֶא and יוֹעֵץ**

Term	#	Reference	Jewish Translation	KJV Translation
פֶּלֶא יוֹעֵץ	1	**Isaiah 9:5[6]**	**Wondrous Adviser**	**Wonderful, Counsellor**
פֶּלֶא	1	Isaiah 25:1	wonders*	wonderful things
וָפֶלֶא	1	Isaiah 29:14	and a wonder	and a wonder
יוֹעֵץ	1	Isaiah 41:28	… counselor	… counsellor
וְיוֹעֵץ	1	Isaiah 3:3	and counselor	and the counsellor

* The Hebrew is actually in the singular, which literally translates as **a wonder**, but the plural is clearly implied here – a rather common occurrence in the Hebrew Bible.

As can be seen from Table IV.A.2-1, the rendition in the KJV of פֶּלֶא יוֹעֵץ as two separate names/titles is inconsistent with the Hebrew text.

The next name/title is אֵל גִּבּוֹר (***EL giBOR***). This expression appears three times in the Hebrew Bible. Two of these cases, in the singular form, are present in the Book of Isaiah – at Isaiah 9:5, 10:21. The third instance is at Ezekiel 32:21, where it appears in the plural form, אֵלֵי גִבּוֹרִים (***eLEI giboRIM***).

The components of this name/title are אֵל (***EL***) and גִּבּוֹר (***giBOR***). The term אֵל is common in the Hebrew Bible, and it has three applications. The most frequent use of this term is in **reference to God** (e.g. Exodus 34:6). Another application is in **reference to other gods**, i.e., idols (e.g., Exodus 34:14). The third use of this term is to identify **someone strong or mighty** (e.g., Ezekiel 17:13; Psalms 29:1), or even **something powerful** (e.g., Psalms 90:11). The term גִּבּוֹר is commonly used in the Hebrew Bible to identify someone who is **mighty, brave, a hero** (e.g., Genesis 10:9; Zechariah 9:13).

The combined expression, אֵל גִּבּוֹר, can have different meanings, depending on the context of the surrounding passage. אֵל גִּבּוֹר can mean **mighty hero**, when the context speaks of a person, or it can mean **Mighty God**, when the context refers to God. The KJV renders אֵל גִּבּוֹר as **The mighty God** at Isaiah 9:6, and as **the mighty God** at Isaiah 10:21. Most Jewish translations render these as **Mighty God** and **the mighty God**, respectively. These terms and their respective renditions in the KJV are shown in Table IV.A.2-2, which also includes a valid alternate translation of this phrase.

<u>Table IV.A.2-2</u> – The name/title אֵל גִּבּוֹר

Term	#	Reference	Common Jewish Translation	Alternate Jewish Translation	KJV Translation
אֵל גִּבּוֹר	2	**Isaiah 9:5[6]**	**Mighty God**	**Mighty Hero**	**The mighty God**
		Isaiah 10:21	[to the] Mighty God	[to the] mighty hero	the mighty God
אֲלֵי גִּבּוֹרִים	1	Ezekiel 32:21	The strongest of the mighty men	The mightiest of heroes	The strong among the mighty

Although the KJV renditions appear to be consistent with the common Jewish translations, in the singular form they differ in terms of the definite article, which is capitalized at Isaiah 9:6 and not at Isaiah 10:21. Moreover, the Hebrew name//title אֵל גִּבּוֹר does not include the definite article הָ־\הַ־ (***ha-***), **the**, applied to the respective terms in the name/title at Isaiah 9:5. The same is true at Isaiah 10:21, except that in the latter case, due to the presence of the preposition אֶל (***EL***), **to**, and as dictated by the context of the passage, the definite article הָ־\הַ־ is implied, and both translations agree on this. The alternate Jewish translation that is included in Table IV.A.2-2 is both valid within the context of each passage and helpful in identifying of whom Isaiah might be speaking here. This is further explored later.

The next name/title is אֲבִי־עַד (***avi-<u>AD</u>***), which appears in the Hebrew Bible only once – at Isaiah 9:5. Consequently, no comparisons are possible, though some analysis helps to understand its usage. This name/title is a possessive phrase that consists of two components. The first component, אֲבִי (***avi***), is the possessive form of the noun אָב (***AV***). The noun אָב appears in the Hebrew Bible 723 times in its singular form and in different inflections and combinations with various prepositions, conjunctions, and other terms, and is used in several different contexts. The predominant application is as **a father**. However, the (singular) noun is also applied as: (a) **a grandfather** (e.g., Genesis 31:42, 32:10); (b) **a progenitor of a line of descendants** (e.g., Genesis 17:4, Isaiah 51:2); (c) one who is the **first of a kind** or **an inventor** (e.g., Genesis 4:20,21); (d) **an advisor**, **a counselor**, **a patron** (e.g., Genesis 45:8, Job 29:16); (e) **a founder** (e.g., Joshua 17:1, 1Chronicles 2:50). In addition, the term is used as **a form of address** to a prophet, a king, and others (e.g., 1Samuel 24:12, 2Kings 5:13), and in the plural form it has additional applications, none of which are relevant to the verse being analyzed. Consequently, the first component of this name/title אֲבִי can have meanings such as, **father of…**, or **grandfather of…**, or **progenitor of…**, etc.

The second component of this name/title is עַד (***<u>AD</u>***), and it is used in Hebrew as a preposition, such as **by** [in the temporal sense, such as *by a certain time*]; **to**, **up-to**; **till**, **until**, and also as a noun, **eternity**, when in combinations with other terms.

What is the correct application in Isaiah 9:5[6]? The Hebrew concordance lists אֲבִי־עַד as one of the 22 cases in which the application of the noun אָב falls under category (d) above, **an advisor**, **a counselor**, **a patron**.[10] Thus, the literal translation of אֲבִי־עַד could be **advisor of eternity**, or **counselor of eternity**, or **patron of eternity**. In terms of the passage and its context, perhaps the most appropriate translations of this name/title אֲבִי־עַד would be **Eternal Father** or **Everlasting Father** (the latter is commonly found in Jewish translations) and **Eternal Patron**. The KJV has **The everlasting Father**. This term is shown in Table IV.A.2-3

Table IV.A.2-3 – The name/title אֲבִי־עַד

Term	#	Reference	Jewish Translation	KJV Translation
אֲבִי־עַד	1	**Isaiah 9:5[6]**	**Eternal Patron**	**The everlasting Father**

Note that the definite article, הָ־, is not present in the Hebrew name/title (since this is a possessive phrase, per the correct grammatical syntax, the only place it would have been appropriate to place a definite article would be as a prefix to עַד). The KJV has both the definite article "*The*" and the noun "*Father*" capitalized in order to enhance the Christological message that is being imputed into this passage.

The last name/title is שַׂר־שָׁלוֹם (***SAR shaLOM***), which appears in the Hebrew Bible only once – at Isaiah 9:5. Therefore, as was the case with the previous name/title, no comparisons are possible. Once again, linguistic analysis is helpful in correctly understanding it. This name/title is a possessive phrase that consists of two components. The first component, שַׂר (***SAR***), though part of a possessive construct, is identical in form to the noun that appears in the Hebrew Bible 111 times, in the singular form, in various inflections and combinations with prepositions and conjunctions, and which means **a government official** (e.g., **a ruler**, or **a minister**, or **a nobleman**, etc.). Although שַׂר is often rendered **a prince** even in Jewish translations, it should be noted that *this term is <u>never</u> used in the Hebrew Bible to describe someone who is a prince*. In the possessive form, then, שַׂר means **commander of…**, or **ruler of…**, or **minister of…**, etc.

The second component of this name/title is שָׁלוֹם (***shaLOM***), which has 237 applications in the Hebrew Bible. The predominant usage of this word is in the context of **peace**, as in **serenity**, or **tranquility**, or **security** (from danger, etc.), and also as in **good relations** among people and between nations, the opposite of conflict or war (e.g., Isaiah 39:8, Ecclesiastes 3:8). Two

[10] <u>*A New Concordance of the Bible*</u>, Abraham Even-Shoshan (Editor), p. 1; Kiryat Sefer Publishing House, Ltd., Jerusalem (1988).

additional, but less frequent applications of it are **status**, or **condition** (e.g., Genesis 37:14, Isaiah 54:13), and **how is…?** (a form of inquiry about the welfare of someone; e.g., Genesis 29:6, 2Samuel 18:32). Clearly, the application of שָׁלוֹם at Isaiah 9:5 is **peace**. Therefore, the proper translation of the name/title שַׂר־שָׁלוֹם is **Ruler of Peace**. The KJV renders it as **The Prince of Peace**. This term is shown in Table IV.A.2-4.

Table IV.A.2-4 – The name/title שַׂר־שָׁלוֹם

Term	#	Reference	Jewish Translation	KJV Translation
שַׂר־שָׁלוֹם	1	**Isaiah 9:5[6]**	**Ruler of Peace**	**The Prince of Peace**

Note that the definite article, הַ־, is not present in the Hebrew name/title (since this is a possessive phrase, per the correct grammatical syntax, the only place it would have been appropriate to place a definite article would be as a prefix to שָׁלוֹם). The KJV has both the definite article "*The*" and the expression "*Prince of Peace*" capitalized for the purpose of enhancing the Christological message.

3. Other Terminology of Interest

As noted above, the difference between the respective renditions of Isaiah 9:6[7] is more subtle. This subtlety goes hand-in-hand with the changes made in the previous verse, the aim of which is to shift the focus of this verse. Namely, attention is diverted from an individual the Prophet had in mind in Isaiah 9:5[6], the one who will eventually become a righteous and successful King of Judah sitting on the throne of David, to Christianity's lord and savior.

As a direct continuation from the previous verse, the Hebrew text of Isaiah 9:6 and its Jewish rendition in English start out with the explanation of that rather lengthy and complex name/title given to the child. The text indicates that God will help create these conditions for the child being spoken of in Isaiah 9:5[6] – the future king in the line of King David.

If Isaiah 9:5[6] were about God, then the statement, "**for the increase of the authority and for peace without end, on David's throne and on his kingdom**", in Isaiah 9:6[7] would be tantamount to placing God "in a box", i.e., this would be equivalent to severely restricting God. This phrase describes the reign of a successful king, such as King Solomon, whose reign was described in similar terms elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible:

> **1Kings 2:12 - And Solomon sat on the throne of David his father; and his kingdom was firmly established.**

Contrast this with Isaiah's vision of God three chapters before Isaiah 9:5-6[6-7], which is in sharp contrast to that of a mortal monarch:

Isaiah 6:1 - In the year of the death of King Uzziah, I also saw the Lord sitting upon a high and exalted throne; and His lower extremities filled the Temple.

If that child in Isaiah 9:5[6] eventually became the ruler only of David's kingdom and nothing more, would it not be presumptuous to attribute divinity to someone whose rule did not exceed that of flesh and blood?

Finally, there is the term אֵין־קֵץ (***EIN-QEITS***). This expression can function both as an adjective that means **without end**, or **endless**, and as a descriptive phrase such as **there is no end**, or **is without end**, depending on the context. This same term appears three times in the Hebrew Bible – at Isaiah 9:5, Ecclesiastes 4:16, 12:12, and twice in combined form with the preposition וְ־, **and**, as וְאֵין־קֵץ (***v^{e}EIN-QEITS***), **and without end** – at Job 22:5, Ecclesiastes 4:8. These terms and their respective renditions in the KJV are shown in Table IV.A.3-1.

Table IV.A.3-1 – The terms אֵין־קֵץ and וְאֵין־קֵץ

Term	#	Reference	Correct Translation	KJV Translation
אֵין־קֵץ	3	**Isaiah 9:6[7]**	**without end**	**there shall be no end**
		Ecclesiastes 4:16	there is no end	there is no end
		Ecclesiastes 12:12	is without end	there is no end
וְאֵין־קֵץ	2	Job 22:5	and are not … without end	and are not … infinite
		Ecclesiastes 4:8	and there is no end	is there no end

It is interesting to note that the KJV renders the expression in Isaiah 9:6[7] as a phrase in the future tense, while in all other instances the phrase is cast in the present tense. This, too, is part of the effort to continue the message being conveyed by the KJV translation of the previous verse.

B. What's In A Name?

As shown in Table II-1, there are two plausible Jewish translations from the Hebrew, each of which is consistent with the grammatical syntax of Isaiah 9:5, yet each of which treats the sequence of names/titles therein. On the other hand, the KJV rendition of it (Isaiah 9:6), which typifies most other Christian translations of this verse, appears to emphasize and misapply this sequence of names/titles. The sequence appears to be accolades, "**… Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace …**", leaves one with the impression that the subject here is God, His substance, and who He is. This is, in effect, designed to create Christological content that points at a certain personality of particular importance to Christianity; namely, Jesus.

From a Jewish perspective, this is quite impossible. Even though numerous Jewish names are phrases that contain one of several of God's titles [commonly used endings are ־אֵל (***-EL***) and ־יָה (***-YAH***)], usually combined with another term (such as the two examples that appear below among the names of Isaiah's and Hosea's children), no true prophet of Israel nor any true Israelite would ascribe

terms such as **The mighty God** or **The Everlasting Father** to a person. Moreover, it is documented in the Hebrew Bible that significant names of children of prophets never describe the child itself. Rather, such names carried with them messages for the people, as is the case with Isaiah's sons, שְׁאָר יָשׁוּב (***sh***^{e}***AR yaSHUV***), **a remnant shall return**, עִמָּנוּאֵל (***immanu'EL***) is **God is with us**, and מַהֵר שָׁלָל חָשׁ בַּז (***maHER-shaLAL-HASH-BAZ***), **quicken-booty hasten-plunder**, and with Hosea's children, יִזְרְעֶאל (***yizr***^{e}***EL***), **God will sow**, לֹא רֻחָמָה (***LO-ruhaMAH***), **[She Was] Not Pitied**, and לֹא עַמִּי (***LO -aMI***), **[You Are] Not My People**.

As noted following Table II-1, and keeping in mind the terminology that was analyzed in Section IV.A above, it is time to examine the meaning of the first of the two verses in this passage.

1. Isaiah 9:5 – Version A

<u>Table IV.B-1</u> – Hebrew text and Version A of English translation

Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text
For a child has been born to us, a son has been given to us, and the authority was placed upon his shoulder, and [He, the] Wondrous Adviser, Mighty God, Eternal Father/Patron, called his name: Ruler of Peace;	כִּי־יֶלֶד יֻלַּד־לָנוּ בֵּן נִתַּן־לָנוּ וַתְּהִי הַמִּשְׂרָה עַל־שִׁכְמוֹ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ פֶּלֶא יוֹעֵץ אֵל גִּבּוֹר אֲבִי־עַד שַׂר־שָׁלוֹם׃

The predominant view among Jewish Sages is that the series of first three names/titles – פֶּלֶא יוֹעֵץ , **Wondrous Adviser**, אֵל גִּבּוֹר, **Mighty God**, אֲבִי־עַד, **Eternal Patron/Father** – are all references to God, and that the last name/title – שַׂר־שָׁלוֹם, **Ruler of Peace** – is the symbolic name/title that God ordered to be given to the child that is the subject of this verse. This is quite similar to the way Hosea was told to name his children (see Hosea 1:4-9).

Who, then, could this child be? The historical record of the Kingdom of Judah recorded in the Hebrew Bible from the time of King *Ahaz* forward, suggests that the name/title שַׂר־שָׁלוֹם, **Ruler of Peace**, alludes to the fact that there was a prolonged period of peace in the Land of Israel during King Hezekiah's reign. This peaceful span was highlighted by his invitation to the remnant of the Jews who lived in the Northern Kingdom of Israel to participate in the celebration of the Passover (see 2Chronicles 30).

2. Isaiah 9:5 – Version B

Table IV.B-1 – Hebrew text and Version A of English translation

Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text
For a child has been born to us, a son has been given to us, and the authority was placed upon his shoulder, and [he] called his name: Wondrous Adviser, Mighty God [or, Mighty Hero], Eternal Patron, Ruler of Peace;	כִּי־יֶלֶד יֻלַּד־לָנוּ בֵּן נִתַּן־לָנוּ וַתְּהִי הַמִּשְׂרָה עַל־שִׁכְמוֹ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ פֶּלֶא יוֹעֵץ אֵל גִּבּוֹר אֲבִי־עַד שַׂר־שָׁלוֹם׃

In this version, the names/titles are components of an expression which, in its totality, could be viewed as referring to someone – one person. In the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sanhedrin, Folio 94a, the Sages consider these titles as appellations of Hezekiah. Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra, the 12th century C.E. Jewish-Spanish exegete, grammarian, and philosopher, picked up on this point of view and relates these names/titles to events and situations that took place during Hezekiah's life (see below). Don Isaac Abravanel (also written as Abrabanel or Abarbanel), the 15th century C.E. Jewish Portuguese exegete, philosopher, financier, and statesman, held a similar view, namely, that the child will bear all these names/titles, perhaps as a sign or symbolic reminder to Israel of the message the Jewish nation embodies.

Rabbi Ibn Ezra first notes that Hezekiah, being a righteous person, bent his shoulders to bear the yoke of Torah and, thereby, he assumed the authority or dominion of God. The following paragraphs show how Ibn Ezra relates the components that make up the long symbolic name of this child to some of God's actions during the reign of Hezekiah, the righteous King of Judah, who succeeded his not so righteous father, King *Ahaz*, to the throne of David.

פֶּלֶא יוֹעֵץ – Wondrous Adviser

"Wondrous" alludes to wonders God performed in his day, such as the wonder of the sun going backwards when Hezekiah was miraculously cured of his illness (Isaiah 38:8). In fact, Hezekiah's recovery, in itself, was considered a wonder.

"Adviser" refers to the fact that the root verb יעץ, **[to] advise, [to] counsel**, (from which the noun יוֹעֵץ, **an adviser, a counselor**, derives), is used when Hezekiah decided to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem and invite the people of the Northern Kingdom to join in the celebration:

> **2Chronicles 30:2 - And the king took counsel [וַיִּוָּעַץ (*va'yiva'ETS*)] with his officers and the entire congregation in Jerusalem, to celebrate the Passover in the second month.**

As the siege of Jerusalem by *Sanheriv* drew near, the text describes how Hezekiah and his staff came up with a plan of defense:

> **2Chronicles 32:3 - And he [Hezekiah] took counsel [וַיִּוָּעַץ] with his officers and his mighty men to stop up the waters of the fountains that were outside the city, and they assisted him.**

And Hezekiah gave the following counsel of assurance to his people:

> **2Chronicles 30:8 – "With him [*Sanheriv*] is an arm of flesh; and with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our wars." And the people relied on the words of Hezekiah, king of Judah.**

Does the expression, "**… and with us is the Lord …**", used in the above passage sound familiar? The Hebrew text of this expression is וְעִמָּנוּ יהוה (***v**e**iMAnu YHVH***). When the Tetragrammaton, ***YHVH***, is replaced by another common title of God, אֵל (***EL***), the Hebrew expression would be וְעִמָּנוּ אֵל (***v**e**iMAnu EL***), an expression similar to that found in Isaiah 7:14, 8:8,10, during the siege of Jerusalem by the armies of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and Syria, from which the Kingdom of Judah was miraculously saved. God's plan for Hezekiah against *Sanheriv* was successful.

אֵל גִּבּוֹר – Mighty Hero

"Mighty Hero" alludes to the fact that, even though *Sanheriv* approached Hezekiah with a large army, Hezekiah did not surrender in defeat. Instead, he defied *Sanheriv*'s threats and blasphemy, and he (and Isaiah) prayed for God's intervention and help, and God's mighty hand destroyed the threat:

> **2Chronicles 32:20-22 – (20) And King Hezekiah and the Prophet, Isaiah the son of *Amoz*, prayed concerning this, and they cried out to Heaven. (21) And the Lord sent an angel, and he destroyed every mighty warrior and commander and officer in the camp of the king of Assyria, and he [*Sanheriv*] returned in shame to his land, and he entered the temple of his god, and some of his own offspring felled him there with the sword. (22) And the Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of *Sanheriv*, the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all others, and guided them on every side.** [See also 2Kings 19:35-36]

אֲבִי־עַד – Eternal Patron

"Eternal Patron" alludes to the fact that, in Hezekiah's merit, the Davidic dynasty was prolonged, and has been preserved for the eternal future. King Hezekiah was one of the most extraordinary personalities among the Jewish kings, about whom some Sages said that he was worthy to be the Messiah.[11]

שַׂר־שָׁלוֹם – Ruler of Peace

"Ruler of Peace" alludes to the fact that there was a prolonged period of peace in the Land of Israel during the reign of King Hezekiah. This peaceful span was highlighted by his invitation to the remnant of the Jews who lived in the Northern Kingdom of Israel to participate in the celebration of the Passover (2Chronicles 30).

[11] See, for example the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sanhedrin, Folios 94a, 98b, 99a.

In summary, then, it is evident that interpretations of Isaiah 9:5, although divergent on the assignment of the first three names/titles, converge on the same individual as the child that is referenced in that verse, namely, Hezekiah, the King of Judah who followed his father, King *Ahaz*, to the Davidic throne.

C. An Historical Perspective

Chapter 9 in the Book of Isaiah is divided into two main sections. The second section, Isaiah 9:7-20[8-21], is the first portion of an oracle (that continues into Chapter 10)[12] on the impending disaster that awaits the Northern Kingdom of Israel for arrogantly refusing to acknowledge its dependence on God. As it concerns the present analysis, this section is not directly relevant to the events being prophesied for the Kingdom of Judah and, therefore, it is not included in the subsequent discussion.

In the first section, Isaiah 9:1-6[2-7], Isaiah prophetically speaks of deliverance, the fall of Assyrian king *Sanheriv* and his army (who besieged Jerusalem and intended to destroy the Kingdom of Judah), and of joy – the announcement of the birth of the Davidic king during whose reign this and its aftermath will all have occurred.

In the actual timeframe when all of this takes place, Isaiah responds to the messenger sent by Hezekiah with a message in which he reaffirms the promise that God made to King David, namely, that the kingdom would be preserved (see 2Samuel 7:12-16). As the army of *Sanheriv*, the king who previously exiled the tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, besieges Jerusalem seeking to capture it and take into exile the people of the Kingdom of Judah, the nation turns to God and obeys Hezekiah's order not to respond. Then, a miraculous event occurred – an angel slaughtered the Assyrian army and, upon *Sanheriv*'s return in defeat, he was assassinated by members of his own family. Thus, the Jewish nation that was on the brink of destruction, standing in the shadow of death, was suddenly and miraculously redeemed, and it stood in a great light, the light that represents deliverance and the events that ensued, which brought about by the emergence of a righteous Davidic king.

By way of leading into a description of the events that lifted the Jewish nation from a state of despair to the ecstasy of a miraculous redemption; Isaiah opens up his ninth chapter with the following declaration:

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[12] The chapter divisions in the Hebrew Bible are artificial additions that came after the canonization. This is exemplified in this second section of Chapter 9, which doesn't actually end with the last verse of the chapter, but continues into Chapter 10 and ends with verse 3 therein. This section, Isaiah 9:7[8]-10:4, is an oracle on the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and it displays a unique poetic structure that consists of four stanzas, each of which ends with the same "chorus", "… **despite all this, His anger has not turned away, and His hand is still outstretched.**" (9:11; 16; 20; 10:4).

> **Isaiah 9:1 - The people who walked in darkness, have seen a great light; those who dwell in the land of the shadow of death, light shone upon them.**

The epilogue to the events described in Chapter 9 is provided in the rest of Chapter 10, Isaiah 10:5-34. The Prophet recounts in the two chapters how God will have saved King Hezekiah and his Kingdom of Judah from the threat of *Sanheriv*'s armies, which had previously captured and exiled most of the population of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

When some passages in the two chapters are superimposed, it becomes even more evident that Isaiah 9 5-6/[6-7] relates directly to how God saved Hezekiah and his people from *Sanheriv* in the eighth century B.C.E. This correlation is illustrated in Table IV.C-1 (adapted from material by Rabbi Tovia Singer)[13].

Table IV.C-1 – "Overlay" of passages from Isaiah 9 and Isaiah 10

Isaiah 9		Isaiah 10	
3[4]	For the **yoke** of his **burden** …	**27**	And it shall come to pass on that day, that his **burden** shall be removed from upon your shoulder, and his **yoke** from upon your neck and the **yoke** shall be destroyed because of oil.
	… and the **staff** of his shoulder, the **rod** of the one who oppressed him have You broken …	**5**	Woe to Assyria, the **rod** of My wrath and the **staff** in whose hands is My anger.
		24	Therefore, so said the Lord, God of Hosts: "My people who dwell in Zion, do not fear Assyria; with a **rod** may he smite you, and his **staff** may he bear over you as he did in Egypt."
	… as on the day of **Midian**.	**26**	And the Lord of Hosts shall stir up a scourge against him, like the smiting of **Midian** at the Rock of Oreb, and his **staff** on the sea, and He shall carry him off after the manner of Egypt.
5[6]	… and [he] called his name Wondrous Adviser, **Mighty God** [*or*, **Might Hero**], Everlasting Patron, Ruler of Peace;	**21**	The remnant shall return, the remnant of Jacob, to the **Mighty God** [*or*, **Mighty Hero**]

Several additional explicit connections between Hezekiah and Isaiah 9:5-6[6-7] are present in the Hebrew Bible. The following passage connects Hezekiah with peace during his reign:

> **2Kings 20:19 - Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, "Good is the Word of the Lord which you have spoken." And he said [to himself], "Is it not so, if there will be peace and truth in my days?"**

Then, there is the passage, part of which was already used in Table IV.C-1, where Isaiah foretells what will occur sometime in the near future:

[13] Rabbi Tovia Singer, *In-depth study guide to the "Let's Get Biblical" Tape Series*, p. 60 (1998).

<u>Isaiah 10:21-22</u> – (21) The remnant shall return, the remnant of Jacob [Israel], to the Mighty God [*or*, Mighty Hero] [אֵל גִּבּוֹר]. (22) For if your people Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, a remnant [of them] shall return; the decreed destruction shall wash away with righteousness.

With Isaiah 10:21-22 in mind, 2Chronicles 30 describes how a remnant from that which was the Northern Kingdom of Israel had returned to Jerusalem during the reign of King Hezekiah to celebrate the Passover. The Northern Kingdom of Israel, which was devastated by the Assyrians in the days of King *A<u>h</u>az*, fell into the hands of Hezekiah as Assyria weakened. For the first time since the days of King Solomon, the national unity was reestablished, and Hezekiah was the first monarch on the throne of David who ruled over a "united" people, at least for the duration of his kingdom (as it is reflected in Isaiah's explanation of the name/title of the child in Isaiah 9:5[6] with which he starts Isaiah 9:6[7] "**for the increase of the authority**").

Finally, there is another connection between Hezekiah and Isaiah 9:5-6[6-7]. This is the expression, "**the zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall accomplish this**", which occurs in only two other places in the Hebrew Bible – at 2Kings 19:31 and Isaiah 37:32. These two passages, which are almost identical, describe the downfall of the Assyrian king *San<u>h</u>eriv* and the miraculous victory of Hezekiah.

✞ **A Common Christian Missionary Claim:** Even if Christian missionaries were convinced by the above analysis that this passage is consistent with the historical events that took place during Hezekiah's reign, they resort to the claim of a "*dual prophetic fulfillment*", i.e., that the prophecy was contemporaneously fulfilled by Hezekiah as well as some 700 years later by Jesus, Christianity's messiah.

✡ **The Jewish Response:** The analysis already demonstrated that the verbs used in Isaiah 9:5 are conjugated in the past tense. However, even without the evidence of changed tenses, "*dual prophetic fulfillment*" fails for the following reasons:

- **The notion of "dual prophetic fulfillment" is unbiblical, and it appears to have been fashioned in attempts to rationalize serious theological deficiencies.**
- **The historical record, including even the accounts in the New Testament, verify the fact that none of the names/titles listed in Isaiah 9:5-6[6-7] describe any attribute of Jesus during his lifetime, except by definition.**

D. Isaiah 9:5-6[6-7] vis-à-vis the New Testament

In addition to all the evidence from the Hebrew Bible presented in the above analysis, there are some additional issues, relevant specifically to the New Testament, which need to be considered by those who insist on interpreting Isaiah 9:5-6[6-7] as describing the messiah of Christianity:

- **The authors of the New Testament do not cite either of these two verses, and nowhere do they ever refer to Jesus by any of the names/titles that appear in Isaiah 9:5[6]. This indicates that they did not consider them as references to Jesus.**
- **These names/titles actually are inconsistent with common references to Jesus. How can "The everlasting Father" also be "The Son"?**
- **Regarding Jesus being The Prince of Peace, as in the KJV rendition of Isaiah 9:6, he appears to proclaim just the contrary about himself:**

  Matthew 10:34(KJV) - Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. [See also Luke 19:27.]

  Surely, this cannot portray someone who is called "The Prince of Peace".

Where is the connection between Isaiah 9:5-6[6-7] and the New Testament?

V. Summary

The detailed analysis of the Hebrew text of Isaiah 9:5-6 and supporting passages in the Hebrew Bible demonstrated how this passage describes events that had already taken place during the era in which these prophetic words were spoken by Isaiah, i.e., it is an historical, not a messianic, passage. Additional passages in the Hebrew Bible helped establish the connection between this near-term prophecy and the righteous King Hezekiah as the one of which Isaiah spoke.

This passage, Isaiah 9:5-6[6-7], appears to have appealed to Church translators as an opportunity to infuse into the words of Isaiah Christological significance, since all that was required to accomplish this were adjustments to the tenses, a manipulation that changed the historical context (past tense) into a current and prophetic context (present and future tenses).

Yet, it still is puzzling why this passage was targeted for revision in view of the fact that the authors of the New Testament did not believe that it applied to Jesus, as is evident from their silence about it.

<u>ISAIAH AND HIS SONS</u>[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

Christian missionaries claim that the name עִמָּנוּאֵל (***Imanu'EL***)[2] in Isaiah 7:14 is unique among all the other names of biblical personalities. According to Christian theology, this verse prophesies the birth of Jesus by a virgin who conceived him from the Holy Ghost. The author of the Gospel of Matthew states it this way (unless stated otherwise, highlighting added for emphasis throughout this document):

> **<u>Matthew 1:23,25(KJV)</u> – (23) "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel," which being interpreted is, "God with us." (25) But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.**

Clearly, this newborn baby boy was named Jesus and not "Emmanuel", and the author's explanatory comment at the end of v. 23 intends to bridge this gap.

This essay is an "excursion" relative to Isaiah 7:14, a verse that was analyzed in detail in other essays.[3] Here, the significance of the names of Isaiah's sons is explored, with particular attention given to the name עִמָּנוּאֵל.

II. ISAIAH AND HIS SONS

Consider Isaiah's own declaration about himself and his children:

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:

- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "<u>h</u>"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע – ***SHVA NA***) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the Consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

[2] A variation of the Hebrew name appears among manuscripts. Some sources have the name as one word, עִמָּנוּאֵל, others have it as two words, עִמָּנוּ אֵל (***IMANU EL***) - a difference that affects neither the pronunciation nor the context.

[3] <u>*Isaiah 7:14 - PART 1: An Accurate Grammatical Analysis*</u> – http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Isa714_1.pdf and
<u>*Isaiah 7:14 - PART 2: Refutation of Christian Apologetics Isaiah and His Sons*</u> - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Isa714_2.pdf

<u>Isaiah 8:18</u> - Here I am, and the children whom the Lord has given me for signs and for wonders in Israel; [they are] from the Lord of Hosts, Who dwells on Mount Zion.

By saying that God gave him children for signs to the nation of Israel, Isaiah indicates the method for naming his children.[4] All his sons have names that are symbolically connected with certain prophesied events, a clue that will be applied in the analysis.

A. One son - שְׁאָר יָשׁוּב (*Sh^e^ar Yashuv*)

The name of a son that is encountered first in the Hebrew Bible is שְׁאָר יָשׁוּב:

<u>Isaiah 7:3</u> – And the Lord said to Isaiah, "Now go out toward A<u>H</u>AZ, you, and *Sh^e^ar Yashuv* [שְׁאָר יָשׁוּב] your son; to the edge of the conduit of the upper pool, to the road of the washer's field.

The literal translation of the name שְׁאָר יָשׁוּב is **a remnant shall return**, and there is no doubt about this boy being Isaiah's son – it is explicitly stated in the text.

The sign, שְׁאָר יָשׁוּב, **a remnant shall return**, is present twice in a prophetic passage by Isaiah:

<u>Isaiah 10:21-22</u> – (21) *A* remnant shall return [שְׁאָר יָשׁוּב], a remnant of Jacob, to the Mighty God [or, mighty hero]. (22) For if your people Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, a remnant {of them} shall return [{בּוֹ} שְׁאָר יָשׁוּב (*Sh^e^ar Yashuv* {*bo*})]; the decreed destruction shall overflow with righteousness.

Note that, while the events described in Chapter 7 relate to the siege on Jerusalem by the two northern armies during the reign of King ***A<u>H</u>AZ***, the prophetic words in Chapter 10, about a righteous remnant of Israel returning, were spoken by Isaiah to King Hezekiah, the son of King ***A<u>H</u>AZ***.

The historical realization of this sign is found in an account of the celebration of the Passover by Hezekiah following the cleansing and consecration of the Temple in Jerusalem. The narrative starts with the invitations that Hezekiah wrote and sent out:

<u>2Chronicles 30:1</u> - And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and he wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, to come to the House of the Lord in Jerusalem; to do the Passover [sacrifice] to the Lord, the God of Israel.

Messengers were dispatched throughout the entire region to deliver the letters:

<u>2Chronicles 30:6</u> - And the couriers went with the letters from the king and his ministers throughout all Israel and Judah, and according to the command of the king,

[4] Isaiah himself was ordered to be a sign to Israel, a story that is recorded in Isaiah 20.

saying, "People of Israel, return to the Lord [שׁוּבוּ אֶל־יהוה (*SHUVU EL-A-DONAI*)], the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and He will return to the remnant [הַפְּלֵיטָה הַנִּשְׁאֶרֶת (*ha'pleyTAH ha'nish'Eret*)] of you, who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria."

As these messengers passed from city to city to distribute the invitations, they did not have an easy time of it - they were being heckled and mocked by many. However, some people accepted the invitation:

2Chronicles 30:10-11 – (10) And the couriers passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh and as far as Zebulun; and there were those who laughed at them and mocked them. (11) But some people of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem.

Those who gathered in Jerusalem celebrated the Passover for seven days and, upon their return to their respective cities, they destroyed the symbols of idolatry:

2Chronicles 31:1 - And when all this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah, and smashed the pillars to pieces, and cut down the Asherah trees, and broke down the high places and the altars throughout all Judah and Benjamin, and in Ephraim, and in Manasseh, until they had completely destroyed them all; and all the people of Israel returned, every man to his possession, to their own cities.

A remnant from what was left of the Northern Kingdom of Israel returned to Judah, during the reign of Hezekiah, to celebrate the Passover, and they repented and returned to God. Thus, the prophetic sign, שְׁאָר יָשׁוּב, **a remnant shall return**, was realized.

B. A second son – מַהֵר שָׁלָל חָשׁ בַּז (*MaHER ShaLAL HASH BAZ*)

The name of another son is מַהֵר שָׁלָל חָשׁ בַּז:

Isaiah 8:3 - And I was intimate with the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son; and the Lord said to me, "Call his name *MaHER ShaLAL HASH BAZ* [מַהֵר שָׁלָל חָשׁ בַּז]".

The literal translation of the name מַהֵר שָׁלָל חָשׁ בַּז is **quicken-booty hasten-plunder** and, as was the case with שְׁאָר יָשׁוּב, there is no doubt that this child, too, is Isaiah's son – this is explicitly stated in the text.

This sign, מַהֵר שָׁלָל חָשׁ בַּז, **quicken-booty hasten-plunder**, is found three times in the Hebrew Bible – once in the identical form of the name itself, and twice more with similar Hebrew terminology and in the same context. The first instance is a prophetic statement about the impending looting by Assyria of all the possessions of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and about Babylon's arrival to pillage the Kingdom of Judah, along with Zedekiah and that generation:

<u>Isaiah 8:1</u> - And the Lord said to me, "Take a great scroll, and write on it in clear script, quicken-booty hasten-plunder [מַהֵר שָׁלָל חָשׁ בַּז]."

The other two instances are included in prophetic statements concerning those who perverted justice and took advantage of widows, orphans, and the poor among the people of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, against whom Assyria will be sent in retribution:

<u>Isaiah 10:2</u> - To pervert the judgment of the impoverished, and to rob the right from the poor of My people; to make widows be their booty [שְׁלָלָם (*sh^{e}laLAM*)], and orphans they should plunder [יָבֹזּוּ (*yavozu*)].

<u>Isaiah 10:6</u> - I will send them against a hypocritical nation, and against the people that anger Me will I order them; to take booty [לִשְׁלֹל שָׁלָל (*lishLOL shaLAL*)], and to plunder [וְלָבֹז בַּז (*v^{e}lavoz BAZ*)], and to tread them down like the mud of the streets.

The historical realization of this sign is the exiling and dispersal of the Northern Kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians, a process that occurred in three stages:

<u>2Kings 15:29</u> - In the days of Pekah, king of Israel, Tiglath-Pil'eser, king of Assyria, came and took Iyon, and Abel-Beth-Maachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria.

<u>2Kings 17:3-4</u> – (3) Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, went up against him [Hoshea the son of Elah]; and Hoshea became his vassal, and paid him tribute. (4) And the king of Assyria found out that Hoshea betrayed him, because he had sent messengers to So, king of Egypt, and brought no tribute to the king of Assyria, as [he had done] year by year; and the king of Assyria arrested him, and incarcerated him in prison.

<u>2Kings 17:5-6</u> - (5) The king of Assyria went up against all the land; and he went up to Samaria, and besieged it for three years. (6) In the ninth year [of the reign] of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria, and exiled Israel to Assyria, and he settled them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

The Northern Kingdom of Israel was uprooted, with the distress being felt by the population, just as described according to the sign.

The Kingdom of Judah also turned away from God. Its fate was similar:

<u>2Kings 25:1-11</u> - (1) And it came to pass in the ninth year of his [Zedekiah's] reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and camped against her; and they built a siege wall around her. (2) And the city was under siege until the eleventh year [of the reign] of king Zedekiah. (3) On the ninth day the famine grew stronger in the city, and there was no food for the people of the land. (4) And the city was broken into, and all the men of war [fled] during the night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which was near the king's garden, and the Chaldeans had surrounded the city, and [the king] went the way of the Arabah. (5) And the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king, and overtook him on the plains of Jericho; and all his army had deserted him. (6) And they seized the king and brought him to the king of Babylon in Riblah; and they put him on trial. (7) And they slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes; and [they] blinded the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with chains of copper, and carried

him to Babylon. (8) And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the nineteenth year [of the reign] of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, the chief executioner, a servant of the king of Babylon, to Jerusalem. (9) And he burnt the House of the Lord, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and all the house of the dignitaries he burnt with fire. (10) And all the army of the Chaldeans, who were with the chief executioner, demolished the walls around Jerusalem. (11) And the rest of the people who were left in the city, and the defectors who defected to the king of Babylon, and the remainder of the population, Nebuzaradan, the chief executioner, carried away....

The prophetic sign, מַהֵר שָׁלָל חָשׁ בַּז, **quicken-booty hasten-plunder**, came true.

C. A third son – עִמָּנוּאֵל (*Imanu'EL*)

Whose son is this, in Isaiah 7:14, who would be named עִמָּנוּאֵל? Clearly, he was going to be the son born to the female mentioned in this verse, but who might that female have been, and who, then, would have been the child's father?

The Jewish Sages are not unanimous in their opinions regarding the identity of this child. Yet, they all agree that the boy was born within the historical timeframe of the events being described by the Prophet. Some hold that the female was the pregnant (or soon to be pregnant) Queen Avi'yah, the wife of King ***AHAZ*** (1Chronicles 29:1). Accordingly, this child would be a son of King ***AHAZ*** and a younger sibling of Hezekiah, who was about nine years old at the time. Others suggest the female was the pregnant (or soon to be pregnant) "prophetess", the wife of Isaiah (Isaiah 8:3), so that the child was one of Isaiah's sons. This disagreement among the Jewish Sages is inconsequential to the context of the historical events described here. The feasibility that עִמָּנוּאֵל is another one of Isaiah's sons is demonstrated in the analysis that follows.

Two of Isaiah's sons have already been identified, the signs that correspond to their respective names have been located in the generally relevant portion of the text, Chapters 7-10, and the evidence of the fulfillment of these prophetic signs was identified in the historic accounts of 2Kings and 2Chronicles. Can this also be done for עִמָּנוּאֵל?

The name עִמָּנוּאֵל first appears in the following well-known passage:

> **Isaiah 7:14 - Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign, "Behold, the young woman is with child, and she will bear a son, and you [young woman] shall call his name Imanu'EL [עִמָּנוּאֵל]."**

The literal translation of the name עִמָּנוּאֵל is **with us [is] God**; this is commonly translated as **God is with us**. Yet, unlike the case with the previous two names, the relationship of this child to Isaiah is not explicitly stated in the Hebrew Bible. Whose son is he?

This sign, עִמָּנוּאֵל, **God <u>is</u> with us**, is present twice in the nearby text:

> **<u>Isaiah 8:8</u> - And it will penetrate into Judah, it will overflow as it passes through, it will reach up to the neck; and the tips of his wings shall fill the breadth of your land, Imanu'el [עִמָּנוּאֵל].** [<u>Note</u>: Some Hebrew Bibles use the alternate form, עִמָּנוּ אֵל.]
>
> **<u>Isaiah 8:10</u> - Take counsel, and it will be foiled; speak a word, and it will not happen; for God <u>is</u> with us [כִּי עִמָּנוּ אֵל (*KI IMANU EL*)].**

In Isaiah 8:8, עִמָּנוּאֵל is identified as someone from the Tribe of Judah who is part of the prophecy described in that passage. In Isaiah 8:10, עִמָּנוּ אֵל is part of the phrase כִּי עִמָּנוּ אֵל – a prophetic manifestation of the sign reflected in this person's name, **[for] God <u>is</u> with us**.

Historically, this prophetic sign was soon to be realized, as related by the account of the siege on Jerusalem by ***San<u>h</u>eRIV***, king of Assyria. The promise from Hezekiah to his people comes first:

> **<u>2Chronicles 32:7-8</u> – (7) "Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid and dismayed because of the king of Assyria, and because of all the multitude that is with him; for He Who <u>is</u> with us [עִמָּנוּ (*IMANU*)] is greater than that [which is] with him; (8) With him is an arm of flesh; and with us <u>is</u> the Lord our God [וְעִמָּנוּ יהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ (*v^e^IMANU A-DONAI E-loHEInu*)] to help us, and to fight our wars." And the people relied on the words of Hezekiah, king of Judah.**

Later, the outcome of the conflict is described:

> **<u>2Chronicles 32:22</u> - And the Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of *San<u>h</u>eRIV*, the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all others, and guided them on every side.**

God was with the House of Judah, but He was not with the House of Israel. The prophetic sign, עִמָּנוּאֵל, **God <u>is</u> with us**, was realized for Judah.

Following the pattern established for the names of the two sons שְׁאָר יָשׁוּב and מַהֵר שָׁלָל חָשׁ בַּז, the analysis demonstrates that the name עִמָּנוּאֵל, too, has an associated prophetic sign and its fulfillment. Therefore, it is most likely that עִמָּנוּאֵל was also the son of Isaiah.

D. Does the name עִמָּנוּאֵל have a special significance?

It is rather common for Hebrew names to contain one of the titles used in the Hebrew Bible to refer to God, and often these names include a description and/or an accolade of God. This matter can be the subject of a long discussion all by itself, which is beyond the scope of the present analysis. It is, however,

instructive to examine this attribute, as it pertains to the name עִמָּנוּאֵל, via the subset of Biblical names shown in Table II.C-1.

Table II.C-1 – Other biblical names that share some attributes with the name עִמָּנוּאֵל

Hebrew Name	Transliteration	English Name	#	# of Persons	Sample Citations (one per person)	Meaning of name
אֲבִיאֵל	***Avi'EL***	Abiel	3	2	1Samuel 9:1, 14:51; 1Chronicles 11:52	God is my father; ***avi*** means **my father [is]**, ***EL*** means **God**.
אֲבִיָּה	***Avi'YAH***	Abijah	23	8	1Samuel 8:2; 1Kings 14:1; Nehemiah 10:8; 1Chronicles 2:24*, 3:10**, 7:8, 24:10; 2Chronicles 29:1*	God is my father; ***avi*** means **my father**, ***YAh[u]*** means **[He is] God**.
אֲבִיָּהוּ	***Avi'YAhu***		2	1	2Chronicles 13:20**	
אֲחִיָּה	***Ahi'YAH***	Ahijah	19	8	1Samuel 14:3; 1Kings 4:3, 11:29***, 15:27; Nehemiah 10:27; 1Chronicles 2:25, 8:7, 11:36	God is my brother; ***aHI*** means **my brother**, ***YAh[u]*** means **[He is] God**.
אֲחִיָּהוּ	***Ahi'YAhu***		5	1	1Kings 14:4***	
אִיתִיאֵל	***Iti'EL***	Ithiel	3	2	Proverbs 30:1; Nehemiah11:7	God is with me; ***ITI*** means **with me [is]**, ***EL*** means **God**.
עִמָּנוּאֵל	***Imanu'EL***	Immanuel	2	1	**Isaiah 7:14** (Phrase at Isaiah 8:10 not included)	**God is with us.**

* - A female
** - This is the same person, the King of Judah
*** - This is the same person, the prophet from Shiloh

In the first three names (and alternate names) shown in Table II.C-1, the literal meaning of the names אֲבִיאֵל [Abiel] and אֲבִיָּה [Abijah] reflect a father-son relationship with God, and the name אֲחִיָּה [Ahijah] reflects a brother-brother relationship with God. The name אִיתִיאֵל [Ithiel] is most closely related to the name עִמָּנוּאֵל. As was noted above, the English translation of this name is **God is with me** and, hence, the similarity to עִמָּנוּאֵל – instead of עִמָּנוּ, **with us [is]**, which is inflected in the 1st-person plural, there is אִיתִי, **with me [is]**, inflected in the 1st-person singular.

Since these relationships are, of course, not literally true, certainly not for the specific personalities who bore those names in the Hebrew Bible, one would have to wonder why Christian missionaries, following Matthew 1:23, claim that the name עִמָּנוּאֵל points to Jesus and proves his divinity. By applying this (faulty) logic, similar arguments could be offered about אֲבִיאֵל [Abiel], אֲבִיָּה [Abijah], אֲחִיָּה [Ahijah], and other names of this type in the Hebrew Bible.

Moreover, as was demonstrated with the name אִיתִיאֵל [Ithiel], it is the "singular voice" equivalent of the name עִמָּנוּאֵל.
The two salient questions are:

- ⇨ **Why do Christian missionaries single out עִמָּנוּאֵל as having messianic significance?**
- ⇨ **What makes עִמָּנוּאֵל special relative to all those other names described above?**

The answer is that the name עִמָּנוּאֵל occurs in a passage that, with the help of some "editorial liberties" in the translation process, can be made to appear as having Christological content. Since none of the other names occur in similar passages, the missionaries have no particular interest in them and ignore them.

III. SUMMARY

The Prophet Isaiah, in his own words, declares that his children were given as signs from God (Isaiah 8:18), and that the name he gave to each of his three sons carried a prophetic message described by these signs and identified as historical events that already took place. The three sons have been identified: שְׁאָר יָשׁוּב (***Sh^eAR YASHUV***; Isaiah 7:3), עִמָּנוּאֵל (***Imanu'EL***; Isaiah 7:14, 8:8), and מַהֵר שָׁלָל חָשׁ בַּז (***MAHER ShaLAL <u>H</u>ASH BAZ***; Isaiah 8:3). Also identified were the respective events for which these names were the prophetic signs, along with the accounts of their respective fulfillments, as recorded in the Hebrew Bible.

This particular method by which the Prophet Isaiah named his children is not a unique occurrence in the Hebrew Bible. The Prophet Hosea, Isaiah's contemporary who ministered to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, was ordered by God to name his children יִזְרְעֶאל (***Yizr^eEL***), **God will sow** (Hosea 1:4), לֹא רֻחָמָה (***LO Ru<u>h</u>AMAH***), **[she was] not pitied** (Hosea 1:6), and לֹא עַמִּי (***LO <u>A</u>MI***), **[you/they are] not My people** (Hosea 1:9). Each of these names represented a specific sign that carried a prophetic message, as described in the first chapter in the Book of Hosea.

The passage Matthew 1:23 demonstrates, in several ways, that its author either did not have an understanding of the Hebrew language and of the Hebrew Bible, or that he deliberately perverted the words of the Prophet Isaiah to create a passage that would support his specific agenda. In addition to the mistranslation of the Hebrew noun הָעַלְמָה (***ha'<u>a</u>lMAH***), **the young woman**, and misrepresentation of the adjective הָרָה (***haRAH***), **[she is] pregnant**, which were discussed elsewhere (see footnote 3), of particular interest here is that same author's faulty explanation of the name עִמָּנוּאֵל as meaning **God with us**, instead of its correct meaning **God <u>is</u> with us**. The omission of the verb "to be" from its meaning serves the author's purpose of infusing into this name a false allusion to Jesus.

EXPOSING A MISSIONARY DECEPTION[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

The resources available on the World-Wide-Web are almost boundless, which can be both a good thing as well as bad thing. It can be good because of the potential educational value that may be derived from these resources. It can be bad because of the potential adverse impact that false as well as insidious information taken from the Internet may have on its users and/or those at whom it is being directed.

Pertinent to ongoing work in counter-missionary education is the presence of a plethora of Christian websites filled with Christian apologetics. The *Jews for Jesus* website[2] is a popular resource of this kind, which is used by other missionary websites to proliferate the misinformation that is so anathematic to the teachings of the Hebrew Bible.

In this essay, the missionary tract *Does almah mean young woman or virgin?*,[3] which appears on the *Jews for Jesus* website, is analyzed and exposed as nothing more than a collection of deceptive misinformation.

II. EXPOSING THE MISSIONARY DECEPTION

Each part of this missionary tract is now examined for its accuracy.

A. The introductory material

In the introductory paragraph, the author points out that one of the commonly used arguments against the Christian doctrine of the "Virgin Birth" and the use of Isaiah 7:14 as a supporting "proof text", is that the Hebrew word עַלְמָה (***a̲lMAH***) does not

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:
- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "h̲"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע – ***SHVA NA***) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

[2] The Internet address of this website is - http://www.jewsforjesus.org

[3] The Internet address for this tract is - http://www.jfjonline.org/apol/qa/almah.htm

mean “a virgin”, and that Jews do not believe in a “Virgin Birth”. The author then makes the following statement:

> **Archaeological findings show that the Hebrew word "almah" refers to a virgin. The possibility of a virgin birth is upheld by open-minded Jewish sages and scholars, even those who are not believers in Jesus.**

This statement, although followed by what the author claims to be "evidence" to support it, is untrue. In the following analysis, each of the “exhibits” brought forth by the author of the missionary tract is addressed in a separate sub-section. The heading for each of the sub-sections identifies an Exhibit # and the respective element from the author's "evidentiary supporting material".

B. Exhibit #1 – A published note by Professor Cyrus H. Gordon

✞ **Christian Claim:** The "archaeological findings" cited in the tract are drawn from a technical note published by the late Cyrus H. Gordon,[4] who is described by the author as "a leading Jewish scholar". The author quotes the following two portions from Professor Gordon's note:[5]

> The commonly held view that "virgin" is Christian, whereas "young woman" is Jewish is not quite true. The fact is that the Septuagint, which is the Jewish translation made in pre-Christian Alexandria, takes 'almah to mean "virgin" here. Accordingly the New Testament follows Jewish interpretation in Isaiah 7:14.
>
> ---
>
> From Ugarit of around 1400 B.C. comes a text celebrating the marriage of the male and female lunar deities. It is there predicted that the goddess will bear a son....The terminology is remarkably close to that in Isaiah 7:14. However, the Ugaritic statement that the bride will bear a son is fortunately given in parallelistic form; in 77:7 she is called by the exact etymological counterpart of Hebrew 'almah "young woman"; in 77:5 she is called by the exact etymological counterpart of Hebrew betulah "virgin." Therefore, the New Testament rendering of 'almah as "virgin" for Isaiah 7:14 rests on the older Jewish interpretation, which in turn is now borne out for precisely this annunciation formula by a text that is not only pre-Isaianic but is pre-Mosaic in the form that we now have it on a clay tablet.

✡ **Jewish Response:** Is this claim true? One striking item right at the beginning of the missionary tract is the characterization of Cyrus H. Gordon as "a leading **Jewish** scholar" (**boldface** added for emphasis). Professor Gordon was an archaeologist, historian, and linguist of world renown, who also happened to be of **Jewish heritage**, albeit, he was a secular Jew. Using the author's terminology, one can say that both Albert Einstein and Carl Sagan were "leading **Jewish** scholars", though certainly not "leading **Judaic** scholars". Both were physicists who happened to be of Jewish heritage. This may just be a matter of *semantics*, although it could also indicate that the author refers to Professor Gordon as "a leading **Jewish** scholar" in order to give the unsuspecting readers

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[4] **'Almah in Isaiah 7:14**, *Journal of Bible and Religion*, p. 106, Vol. XXI, No. 2 (April 1953).

[5] In the note, the notation **'a** is used for the transliteration of the Hebrew letter ע (***Ayin***; the 1st letter in the word עַלְמָה).

the (false) impression that he is a "**Judaic** scholar". If the latter is the case, then it is plausible that, under this guise, the author lifts certain "suitable" segments out of Professor Gordon's technical note in order to support his claims. This technical note indicates that, in fact, the opposite conclusion may be drawn, with the information contained in it actually having no validity regarding the theological aspects of this subject.

A superficial reading of the material being selectively quoted from the technical note in the missionary tract could mislead the reader to believe that Professor Gordon supported the common Christian missionary claim that the Hebrew word עַלְמָה means “a virgin”. However, a careful examination of the "evidence" demonstrates this claim to be weak at best, if not downright false.

Professor Gordon’s note is reproduced in Figure II.B-1 below, in which the portions quoted in the missionary tract are shown in highlighted form.

<u>Figure II.B-1</u> – The full text of the note by Professor Gordon

‘Almah in Isaiah 7:14

CYRUS H. GORDON*

Ever since the publication of the Revised Standard Version there has been a storm of debate over the translation of ‘almah in Isaiah 7:14 as “young woman” instead of the King James “virgin.” The commonly held view that “virgin” is Christian, whereas “young woman” is Jewish, is not quite true. The fact is that the Septuagint, which is the Jewish translation made in pre-Christian Alexandria, takes ‘almah to mean “virgin” here. Accordingly, the New Testament follows Jewish interpretation in Isaiah 7:14.

Little purpose would be served in repeating the learned explanation that Hebraists have already contributed in their attempt to clarify the point at issue. It all boils down to this: the distinctive Hebrew word for “virgin” is betulah, whereas ‘almah means a “young woman” who may be a virgin, but is not necessarily so.

The aim of this note is rather to call attention to a source that has not yet been brought into the discussion. From Ugarit of around 1400 B.C. comes a text celebrating the marriage of the male and female lunar deities. It is there predicted that the goddess will bear a son. (For the translation, see my “Ugaritic Literature”, Rome, 1949, pp. 63-64.) The terminology is remarkably close to that in Isaiah 7:14. However, the Ugaritic statement that the bride will bear a son is fortunately given in parallelistic form; in 77:7 she is called by the exact etymological counterpart of Hebrew ‘almah “young woman”; in 77:5 she is called by the exact etymological counterpart of Hebrew betulah “virgin.” Therefore, the New Testament rendering of ‘almah as “virgin” for Isaiah 7:14 rests on the older Jewish interpretation, which in turn is now borne out for precisely this annunciation formula by a text that is not only pre-Isaianic but is pre-Mosaic in the form that we now have it on a clay tablet.

* Professor of Assyriology and Egyptology, Dropsie College

The first thing to note is that the portions quoted by the author of the tract were selected, by design, to promote the standard missionary agenda. Not quoted are the remarks in the second paragraph concerning the "learned explanations", by Hebraists, of the Hebrew terms בְּתוּלָה (***b^etuLAH***) and עַלְמָה.

Secondly, certain technical elements in Professor Gordon's note require further elaboration and explanation. One item concerns Professor Gordon's rather surprising reference to the ***Septuagint***, considering his credentials as linguist and archaeologist. A common misperception prevails about the *Septuagint*: Today's *Septuagint* (***LXX***, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible used by Christians) is a translation by unknown authors, most likely Christians, that is not the same document as the ***Original Septuagint***.

The evidence in support of this statement is abundant:

- The LXX contains errors that learned Jewish scholars would not make, particularly when one considers the size of the team that produced the translation.[6]
- The *Original Septuagint* was a translation of only the Torah (the Five Books of Moses) into (***Koiné***) Greek by 72 learned bi-lingual Jewish scholars (Rabbis). The work took place in Alexandria, Egypt, in the mid-third century B.C.E. The well-known *Letter of Aristeas* describes this entire project as having been commissioned by King Ptolemy II Philadelphius of Alexandria.[7]
- In Section 3 of his *Preface to the Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus states that the translation was "of our law" (i.e., the Mosaic Law),[8] and the details on the entire event appear later, in Book XII, Chapter 2, Sections1-4.[9]
- St. Jerome, an early Christian Church father, in the Preface to his *Book of Hebrew Questions*, affirms Josephus' statement that the *Original Septuagint* was a translation of only the Five Books of Moses.[10]
- The Babylonian Talmud, in Tractate Megilah, Folios 9a&b, records 15 phrases which the Jewish scholars translated in a unique fashion, and which deviate from the (later) Masoretic Text, yet only two of these uniquely translated phrases appear in the Christian *LXX*.[11]
- Lastly, an analysis of the Greek language used in the *LXX* translation, which includes Prophets and Writings, indicates that it is not the *Koiné* Greek that was prevalent in the mid-third century B.C.E.; rather, it is a more modern dialect of the Greek language.

[6] One such error concerns the number of people who went to Egypt with Joseph. Three references in the Hebrew Bible have the number as 70 (Genesis 46:27; Exodus 1:5; Deuteronomy 10:22). The LXX has the number as 75 at Genesis 46:27 & Exodus 1:5, but as 70 at Deuteronomy 10:22. The most likely reason for the 75 at the first two places and 70 in the third place is that in the New Testament the number is cited as 75 (Acts 7:14), and that the unknown (probably Christian) translators forgot to change the number at Deuteronomy 10:22, something a learned Jewish scholar would never do.

[7] *The Letter Of Aristeas*, R.H. Charles-Editor, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1913; available on the Internet at - http://www.piney.com/ApocAristeas.html

[8] Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews – Preface*; available on the Internet at - http://www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/ant-pref.htm

[9] Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews – Chapter XII*; available on the Internet at - http://www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/ant-12.htm

[10] St. Jerome, *Preface to the Book of Hebrew Questions*; available on the Internet at - http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf206.vii.ii.v.html

[11] The 15 phrases which appeared in the Original Septuagint are in the following verses: Genesis 1:1, 1:26, 2:2, 5:2, 11:7, 18:12, 49:6; Exodus 4:20, 12:40, 24:5, 24:11; Leviticus 11:6; Numbers 16:15; and Deuteronomy 4:19, 17:3. The only two of these found in the LXX are: Genesis 2:2 and Exodus 12:40.

Therefore, the *Septuagint* to which Professor Gordon refers cannot be the original Jewish translation. Rather, it is most likely the *LXX*, which contains known mistranslated verses as well as errors, and in which the order of books follows the Christian, not the Jewish, canon. Unfortunately, it is only possible to speculate about Professor Gordon's choice of this particular terminology. Not being a Judaic scholar, the theological aspects regarding the *Septuagint* were not the focus of Prof. Gordon's work, and he may have been unaware of the available evidence that proves the *LXX* is not the *Original Septuagint*.

Another technical issue concerning Professor Gordon's note is the statement that the inscribed Ugaritic clay tablet, said to be from around 1400 B.C.E., is pre-Mosaic. It is, as he states, "pre-Isaianic". The consensus among scholars (Jewish and Gentile) is that the Mosaic era dates to around 1400-1300 B.C.E. Given that the available standard tools for absolute dating at the time of the discovery of these tablets (late 1940's and early 1950's) were not even accurate to ±100 years, perhaps the dating of the tablet "From Ugaritic of around 1400 B.C.E." should have been stated more properly as "From Ugaritic of around 1500-1300 B.C.E.".

Consider next the Ugaritic poem inscribed on the clay tablet, to which Professor Gordon refers in his technical note.[12] Professor Gordon's comments and his translation of the relevant ten lines (highlighted; the full poem contains 50 lines) are shown in Figure II.B-2 below. The blank spaces within brackets, ([ ]), indicate missing, blank, or illegible parts on the original tablet, some of which was redacted by Professor Gordon.

Figure II.B-2 – Professor Gordon's introduction and the relevant lines from the poem

Chapter IV

THE WEDDING OF NIKKAL AND THE MOON

The bard opens with the declaration that he sings of the *dramatis personae*: the bride Nikkal[(1)], the groom Yariḫ = the Moon, and Ḫrḫb the King of Summer who acts as intermediary to arrange the match. The time is a fitting one: when the Sun goes down and the Moon rises. The wedding is indicated because the bride-to-be is destined to bear a son. The Ktrt are informed of the situation for they are to celebrate joyous occasions like marriages in song. The intermediary is instructed to procure the bride for whom Yariḫ is ready to pay a price of a thousand shekels of silver, even a myriad of gold, plus gems of lapis – lazuli. The prospective groom also promises to be a good husband, and cultivate his beloved, even as a farmer transforms a field into a fertile vineyard. The intermediary suggests a couple of other goddesses who could be obtained as brides without difficulties, but Yariḫ is steadfast in his desire to wed Nikkal. The wedding is performed by the weighing of the marriage price by the bride's family. The bard sings to the bride, who is to be illuminated by the light of her groom.

After a scribal line across the tablet, the text concludes with the poet's singing of the Ktrt descending among the flowers to Ltpn, the head of the pantheon. Then the bard mentions the counting of the dowry and trousseaux.

[12] *Ugaritic Literature – A Comprehensive Translation of the Poetic and Prose Texts*, Cyrus H. Gordon, pp. 63-64, (Rome, 1949).

77:1 I sing of Nikkal-and-Ib [ ]
Hrhb, King of Summer
Hrhb, *Estival* King
When the Sun sets
The Moon *rises*
- - [ ]
77:5 A virg[in] will give birth [ ]
[To the K]trt
Daughters of *shouting*
[Swallows].
Lo a maid will bear a s[on(2)]
answers/sees *lo* for his love she *is* [ ]
[ ]for her flesh, my blood [ ]
77:10 And wine like/and one wed [ ]

---

(1) From Nin-gal, a Sumerian lunar goddess. Very few Sumero-Accadian deities penetrated into Canaan and Egypt. Nikkal is an exception attested in Ugarit and Egypt (UH § 18.1310). She is also called Ib or Nikkal-and-Ib in this poem.
(2) Such annunciations are common in Ugaritic and biblical literature. The earliest one in Scripture is that by an angel to Hagar, predicting the birth of Ishmael (Gen. 16:11).

This poem speaks of the marriage of two pagan gods. Although lines 77:5 and 77:7 say what Professor Gordon described in his note, several grammatical, contextual, and theological issues arise when attempting to compare this text with the common renderings of Isaiah 7:14 in Christian Bibles:

- **Tenses*:*** In Isaiah 7:14, הָעַלְמָה (***ha'almah***), **the young woman**, is already with child. The Hebrew term הָרָה (***harah***) is an adjective that refers to a woman who is already pregnant, and it is used in this manner consistently throughout the Hebrew Bible. In the poem, the future tense is used.
- **Identification:** In Isaiah 7:14, the term הָעַלְמָה is used, i.e., עַלְמָה with the definite article הָ־ (***ha-***), **the**, which identifies a specific female who was known to both Isaiah and King Ahaz. In the poem, the definite article is absent in both instances, and the general article, **a**, is used instead of the definite article, **the**, thereby removing the specific identification, something that bears similarity to the Christian renditions of Isaiah 7:14 and, of course, to the "quote" of the verse in Matthew 1:23.
- **Interchangeability of terms:** The statement by Prof. Gordon, "… in 77:7 she [the bride] is called by the exact etymological counterpart of Hebrew ‘almah “young woman”; in 77:5 she is called by the exact etymological counterpart of Hebrew betulah “virgin.”", does not necessarily imply that the two terms are interchangeable. Similar situations occur in Genesis. Rebecca is referred to as הַנַּעֲרָ (***ha'na'ara***), **the young girl** and בְּתוּלָה, **a virgin**, in Genesis 24:16; and later on in the same chapter, she is referred to as הָעַלְמָה, **the young woman**, in Genesis 24:43, and הָאִשָּׁה (***ha'ishah***), **the woman**, in Genesis 24:39,44. Does this mean that the respective pairs or all these terms are interchangeable? Of course it does not!
- **Language used by Isaiah:** This is a dual problem -
  - Why would Isaiah use the ambiguous Ugaritic style only at Isaiah 7:14? He had other, more accurate, vocabulary at his disposal had he desired to specifically refer to a virgin; after all, he used the word בְּתוּלָה, five times throughout his Book (see Isaiah 23:4; 23:12; 37:22; 47:1; 62:5).

⦿ Why would Isaiah, the Prophet who railed against idolatry (see, e.g., Isaiah 19:7-8; 41:18-26; 44:9-20; 46:1-7; 57:3-14; 65:1-7), use ambiguous language from an old pagan source (if it was even known to him) in a prophecy that had to be very precise? Like the other prophets of his era, Isaiah condemned idolatry and idolaters. According to our tradition, as soon as Manasseh, a notorious idolater, succeeded to the throne, he had Isaiah murdered.

The above information indicates that the author of the missionary tract misused the material in Professor Gordon's technical note by selectively quoting from it only some portions that served his purpose. This puts into question the relevance of the technical note to the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14.

Although Professor Gordon was widely recognized and well respected as a secular linguist and archaeologist, his credentials as a Judaic theological scholar are non-existent as indicated by the absence of any relevant published record in that area. This is also confirmed in the short biographical sketch in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, where he is described as a "U. S. Semitic scholar",[13] and from the fact that this particular technical note is not cited in any other known publication (Jewish or Christian) on Isaiah 7:14, except for this missionary tract. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that the claim concerning Professor Gordon's note on Isaiah 7:14 lacks both integrity and validity.

Conclusion on Exhibit #1: The Christian missionary claim that archaeological findings support עַלְמָה to mean "a virgin" in Isaiah 7:14 is false.

C. Exhibit #2 – Rabbi Abraham Farissol on the possibility of a "Virgin Birth"

✝ **Christian Claim:** The author of the missionary tract makes the statement that, "Jewish sages have sometimes had something to say about the possibility of a virgin birth". The first citation offered is a quote attributed to Rabbi Abraham Farissol, a noted medieval Jewish Sage:

> We cannot deny the possibility that God, may He be blessed, could create in a virgin, even one whom no man has known, for He created everything out of nothing.
>
> --quoted by Daniel J. Lasker, Jewish Philosophical Polemics Against Christianity in the Middle Ages (New York: KTAV/ADL, 1977), p. 153.

✡ **Jewish Response:** Rabbi Abraham Farissol (1452-1528) was a Jewish Sage, polemicist, and geographer, who hailed from Ferrara, Italy. The question is: *Is the quote in the missionary tract an accurate representation of the context of Rabbi Abraham Farissol's words?*

The answer to this question is obtained, once again, by examining the source being quoted in Exhibit #2. The material from which the quote was extracted appears at the beginning of the seventh chapter in Professor Lasker's book, the

[13] *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 7, p. 794, Keter Publishing House Ltd. (1971)

first few paragraphs of which are reproduced in Figure II.C-1, where the passage quoted by the author of the missionary tract is highlighted.[14]

Figure II.C-1 – Relevant portion from Daniel J. Lasker's book [footnote references omitted**]**

CHAPTER SEVEN *Virgin Birth*

The Christian dogma of virgin birth teaches that Mary, the mother of Jesus, remained a virgin, i.e., a *virgo intacta*, her entire life, before, during, and after the birth of her son. "The Christian belief is that Mary's virginity was never broken, neither at the time of the birth [*in partu*] nor before [*ante partum*], nor after [*post partum*]."(1) The Jewish polemicists challenged this assertion on all three points.

The doctrine of the virgin conception was not attacked per se. The possibility that a woman might conceive with her virginity intact, though by means of normal fertilization, is an occurrence which is conceded in the Talmud. Nevertheless, the Jewish polemicists rejected the notion that God could become incarnate by impregnating a virgin and fathering an offspring who was, according to Christian doctrine, God Himself. Hence, the Jewish thinkers rarely offered arguments against the doctrine of Mary's virginity ante partum without reference to incarnation. Abraham Farissol expressed it this way:

> We cannot deny the possibility that God, may He be blessed,, could create a creation in a virgin, even one whom no man has known, For He created everything out of nothing. Rather, we deny that there was a need for incarnation.

The denial of incarnation was sufficient justification for rejection of the doctrine of Mary's virgin conception of Jesus.

[**For future reference:** Take note of the first two sentences in the second paragraph of Chapter Seven above (shown in **bold** font); these will be discussed in Sec. II.E below.]

According to the context of the entire passage, Rabbi Abraham Farissol said something much more significant than the author of the missionary tract wants to convey to the reader, which is evident from the portions he left out of the quote, namely, the phrase "a creation" and the entire last sentence, "Rather, we deny that there was a need for incarnation.". The context in which this quote is presented by Professor Lasker is stated immediately following the quote from Rabbi Abraham Farissol.

Professor Lasker concludes the seventh chapter with the following statement (the last sentence is shown in **bold font** for emphasis):[15]

Figure II.C-2 – Concluding paragraph in Daniel J. Lasker's book

There were not many Jewish philosophical arguments against the Christian doctrine of virgin birth. After they cited the obvious philosophical contradictions between virgin birth and the impossibility of the interpenetrability of bodies, and rebutted the images of virgin birth adduced from nature, the polemicists employed no further rational arguments. As Isaac Lupis stated: "What more can I add in order to refute this strange belief since it has absolutely no support, neither from reason nor from the intellect."(71) **The dogma of virgin birth, then, was one more Christian belief which the Jewish polemicists regarded as irrational; they attempted to demonstrate that irrationality through the use of philosophical arguments.**

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[14] Daniel J. Lasker, Jewish Philosophical Polemics Against Christianity in the Middle Ages, p. 153, Ktav Publishing House, Inc. (1977).
[15] Ibid, pp. 158-9.

This evidence demonstrates that the reference in the missionary tract to Professor Lasker's quote from Rabbi Abraham Farissol's works cannot be used to support the claims that a "Virgin Birth" was foretold by Isaiah and that the application of עַלְמָה in Isaiah 7:14 means "a virgin".

The author of the missionary tract deceives his readers by lifting out of its true context a portion from an original work by a Jewish Sage in order to promote his/her own agenda.

<u>Conclusion on Exhibit #2</u>: The Christian missionary claim that Rabbi Abraham Farissol supported the notion of a "Virgin Birth" is deceptive and false.

D. <u>Exhibit #3</u> – The author of a medieval Jewish polemic work writes on the possibility of a "Virgin Birth"

✞ **<u>Christian Claim</u>:** The author of the missionary tract offers more evidence that Jewish Sages supported the possibility of a "Virgin Birth" with the following quote from a well-known medieval Jewish work of polemics:

> Granted that the prophet said that a virgin would give birth to a son. So what? There is, after all, no doubt that the Lord's hand is not incapable of fulfilling his will and desire, and that he is a ruler who can do whatever he wishes...."
>
> --David Berger, The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages: A Critical Edition of the Nizzahon Vetus (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1996, © 1979), p. 103.

✡ **<u>Jewish Response</u>:** The *<u>Nizzahon Vetus</u>*, or **Old Book of Polemic**, is an exceptionally comprehensive example of medieval Jewish polemic against Christianity. The anonymous Northern European Jew who wrote the book in the late 13th or early 14th century, C.E. refutes the Christological interpretation of the Hebrew Bible and subjects the New Testament and Christian dogma to a rigorous critique. So, once again, the question is: *Is the quote in the missionary tract an accurate representation of the context of the original material from the <u>Nizzahon Vetus</u>?*

Figure II.D-1 shows approximately half of the relevant section from David Berger's book, with the portion quoted by the author of the missionary tract highlighted for emphasis.[16]

<u>Figure II.D-1</u> – Relevant portion from the *<u>Nizzahon Vetus</u>*

[86] The *'almah*, Immanuel, and the prophetess (Isa. 7, 8)

The heretics also say that "Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son" [Isa. 7:14] was said about Mary, who was a virgin and bore a son, for otherwise this would not constitute a novelty or a sign. "And shall call his name Immanuel" [ibid.], for when he is born

[16] David Berger, *<u>THE JEWISH CHRISTIAN DEBATE IN THE HIGH MIDDLE AGES - A critical edition of the NIZZAHON VETUS</u>*, (pp. 102-104), Jason Aronson, Inc. (1996)

God[sic] will be with us; i.e., he will be God. "And I came unto the prophetess" [Isa. 8:3] – that is Mary. "Come together, O people, and you shall be broken in pieces.…Take counsel together, and it shall come to naught…" [Isa. 8:9-10] – there are the Jews who took counsel together to kill him.

Now listen men of understanding, and see how confused their words are and how they contradict the words of the living God. The book of Isaiah is, after all, in our possession, and it testifies that these verses are not written together but are found in two or three different places; moreover, it testifies further that Isaiah prophesied concerning two sons, one named Immanuel and another named Maher Shalal Hash Baz.

Now, if you would prefer to answer briefly, then tell him: Granted that the prophet said that a virgin would give birth to a son. So what? There is, after all, no doubt that the Lord's hand is not incapable of fulfilling his will and desire, and that he is a ruler who can do whatever he wishes, but still how do you know that this virgin is Mary? Where do you find her name or that of her son so that you may know? I could say, rather, that this refers to another virgin or that it will happen in the future. And if your view is based on the name Immanuel, i.e., God is with us, this is no proof, for you could make the same claim of divinity regarding Ishmael the son of Hagar if you use this sort of reasoning. There too the angel told her, "Behold you are with child and shall bear a son, and you shall call his name Ishmael" [Gen. 16:11], and you can interpret that name as follows: Everyone will listen to him because he is God. Similarly, it says of Hannah, "And she called his name Samuel" [1 Sam. 1:20], a name that can be explained as "His name is God." If he will then say that Hagar and Hannah were not virgins while Mary was, this would contradict Solomon, who said, "There is no new thing under the sun… that which has been is that which shall be" [Eccles. 1:9]. Moreover, where do we find that the prophets warned us concerning his Torah and the belief in his divinity as we were warned at Sinai by Moses, as it is written, "I am the Lord your God… you shall have no other gods beside me" [Exod. 20:2-3]? Thus, one can understand that your words have no substance and that these prophecies do not deal with divinity.

Moreover, you can defeat him and respond with true and proper words by telling him: According to you that Isaiah said, "Behold, a young woman conceives" and the entire passage concerning Mary and her son, come and examine the language of the verse and let your ears hear what comes out of your mouth. With regard to the verse, "Behold, a young woman conceives (*harah*)," you cannot explain *harah* except as a reference to the past, i.e., that she has already conceived, while Mary had not yet conceived and would not do so for another thousand years. According to you, then, why does it say *harah*? It should have said *tahar* which would have been a reference to the future. Moreover, see what it says soon after: "For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you abhor shall be forsaken of both her kings" [Isa. 7:16]. Now, if he was God, what is the meaning of "before the child shall know etc."? Why, he should have known and understood the difference between good and evil from the day of his birth if God was within him. Indeed, with regard to your statement that he eventually performed wonders so that people would believe that he was God, what could have been a greater sign than distinguishing between good and evil as soon as he came out of his mother's womb and remaining without food and drink? Then, people would have believed in him. As it is, however the fact that we saw nothing in him during his youth to distinguish him from other infants leads us to disbelieve those wonders performed in his adulthood and to conclude that he performed them through magic in the manner of charmers, diviners, and observers of times. Moreover, where do these verses indicate that Mary was a virgin when she gave birth to her son? After all, *'almah* in Hebrew does not necessarily denote a virgin; *virgo* means young woman.

The title of item [86], "*The 'almah, Immanuel, and the prophetess (Isa. 7, 8)*", and its content, indicate this is a refutation of the claim by Christians concerning the use of עַלְמָה to mean "a virgin". The passage quoted by the author of the missionary tract is the opening statement in a counter argument that refutes the

"Virgin Birth". Take note of what was not quoted! Although the quoted segment itself, without the surrounding text, appears to support the missionary claim, the entire passage demonstrates that the *Nizzahon Vetus* is not "friendly" to Christian doctrine, especially when such doctrine is claimed to be based on passages from the Hebrew Bible.

It is evident that, once again, the author of the missionary tract deceives his readers by lifting out of its true context a portion from an original work by a Jewish scholar in order to promote his/her own agenda.

Conclusion on Exhibit #3: The Christian missionary claim that the Jewish author of the *Nizzahon Vetus* supports the notion of a "Virgin Birth" is deceptive and false.

E. Exhibit #4 – Dr. Adam Kamesar on the possibility of a "Virgin Birth"

✞ **Christian Claim:** The next citation offered as evidence that Jewish Sages supported the possibility of a virgin birth is the following quote from Dr. Adam Kamesar, contemporary scholar:

> The doctrine of the virgin conception was not attacked per se. The possibility that a woman might conceive with her virginity intact, though by means of normal fertilization, is an occurrence which is conceded in the Talmud.
>
> --Adam Kamesar, "The Virgin of Isaiah 7:14: The Philological Argument from the Second to the Fifth Century," Journal of Theological Studies, n.s., vol. 41 part 1 (April 1990), p. 51.

✡ **Jewish Response:** Dr. Adam Kamesar is the Director of the School of Graduate Studies at the Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, OH (the Rabbinical seminary of Reform Judaism). *Did Dr. Kamesar really write this?*

Following Figure II.C-1, a special note was made concerning the following two sentences in the second paragraph of the shown portion from the seventh chapter in Professor Lasker's book:

> **The doctrine of the virgin conception was not attacked per se. The possibility that a woman might conceive with her virginity intact, though by means of normal fertilization, is an occurrence which is conceded in the Talmud.**

This passage from Professor Lasker's book is identical to the passage being attributed to Dr. Kamesar by the author of the missionary tract. *What is going on here?*

Dr. Kamesar is, indeed, a contemporary Jewish/Judaic scholar noted for his research on St. Jerome. The cited paper presents an in-depth analysis of early Christian apologetics (i.e., defenses) concerning the Christian translation and

interpretation of the Hebrew noun עַלְמָה in Isaiah 7:14.[17] Dr. Kamesar's article is based on his doctoral dissertation, which was submitted at Oxford University in 1987. However, nowhere to be found in this article is the quote attributed to him by the author of the missionary tract. The quoted passage was actually lifted from Professor Lasker's book, not from Dr. Kamesar's article, and the author of the missionary tract deceives the reader yet again.

Conclusion on Exhibit #4: The missionary claim that Dr. Adam Kamesar supports the notion of a "Virgin Birth" is a bold lie!

F. Exhibit #5 – Professor Suzanne Daniel on the Septuagint as a Jewish document

✞ **Christian Claim:** Attempting to convince readers that Professor Gordon's reference to the *Septuagint* lends credence to the claim that it, the *LXX*, is a Jewish document, the author of the missionary tract writes:

> The Septuagint is the translation into Greek of the Hebrew Scriptures, made for the benefit of Greek-speaking Jews in Egypt. This is the version that translated "almah" as "parthenos," which nearly always means "virgin." Some have discounted its value, claiming that except for the Torah, the Septuagint is a Gentile Christian translation. However, that is not the view of most scholars.

To support the claim that "... **that is not the view of most scholars.**", the author quotes as evidence the following portions from a scholarly article about the *Greek Septuagint*:

> Suzanne Daniel, Associate Professor of Judeo-Hellenistic Literature, Hebrew University, Jerusalem:
>
> On the Torah portion of the Septuagint:
>
> It is assumed that the project was initiated by the Greek-speaking Jewish community itself, which needed a version of the Pentateuch for worship and instruction.
>
> On the Prophets and the Writings portions of the Septuagint:
>
> It is...generally held that the versions of the Former and Latter Prophets must be placed before the end of the third century B.C.E., and that at least some of the Hagiographa were already translated at the beginning of the second century B.C.E., since the prologue to the Greek Ben-Sira (132 B.C.E.) refers to an already existing version of "the Law, the Prophets, and the other writings." It is therefore accepted that a complete version of the Hebrew Bible existed at least at the beginning of the first century C.E.
>
> --"Bible," section "Greek: The Septuagint", Encyclopedia Judaica.

✡ **Jewish Response:** *Is this claim accurate?* Before the quoted segments are analyzed, the following claim must be addressed:

[17] ***The Virgin of Isaiah 7:14: The Philological Argument from the Second to the Fifth Century***, Journal of Theological Studies, NS, pp. 51-75, Vol. 41, Pt. I (April 1990)

"Some have discounted its value, claiming that except for the Torah, the Septuagint is a Gentile Christian translation."

This is not an accurate statement concerning the Jewish objections. The Jewish issues with the *Septuagint* being an authorized Jewish translation into Greek of the *entire* Hebrew Bible are based on the following evidentiary support:

- Historical evidence that shows the *Original Septuagint* was an authorized Greek translation of *only* the Torah.
- Evidence found in today's *LXX* (*Septuagint*), such as factual errors, missing information, and a dialect that is inconsistent with the *Koiné* Greek spoken in the third century B.C.E.

Today's *LXX* is a document entirely translated by unknown authors, most likely by Church translators, the evidence is ample and convincing, and was summarized in Section II.B above.

The relevant portion from the article on the *Septuagint* by Professor Daniel is shown in Figure II.F-1, with the passages that are quoted in the missionary tract highlighted for emphasis.[18]

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[18] Suzanne Daniel, "*The Septuagint*", in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 4B, pp.851-856, Keter Publishing House, Ltd. (1971). [The complete article cannot be reproduced due to copyright restrictions.]

<u>Figure II.F-1</u> – The relevant portion from Professor Daniel's article on the *Septuagint*

> **ORIGIN AND HISTORY**. It is widely accepted that what the *Letter of Aristeas* relates about an official translation of the Pentateuch, made in Alexandria at the beginning of the third century B.C.E., may be taken as valid. However, it is assumed that the project was initiated by the Greek-speaking Jewish community itself, which needed a version of the Pentateuch for worship and instruction. This version, which was undoubtedly a collective undertaking, perhaps based on previous written or oral attempts, was hailed with enthusiasm by the community. It was followed by translations of the other books of the Hebrew Bible. According to Thackeray, the liturgical needs of the Alexandrian Jews led to a gradual translation of the Latter Prophets, followed by that of the Former Prophets, during the second century, while the books of the Hagiographa were translated separately in the first century B.C.E. or later. However, it is more generally held that the versions of the Former and Latter Prophets must be placed before the end of the third century B.C.E., and that at least some of the Hagiographa were already translated at the beginning of the second century B.C.E., since the prologue to the Greek Ben-Sira (132 B.C.E.) refers to an already existing version of the "the Law, the Prophets, and the other writings." It is therefore accepted that a complete version of the Hebrew Bible existed at least at the beginning of the first century C.E. All or nearly all of it was of Egyptian origin, but as each component emerged, it was disseminated throughout the Hellenistic Diaspora and Palestine. There must have been considerable confusion in its transmission, due to the normal scribal corruptions and a growing incomprehension of the intentions of the translators, who had used a rather flexible technique and had not worked on a standard original. The resulting deviations were all the more disconcerting when the Hebrew canon was definitely fixed. This may explain the dissatisfaction of the Jews for the Septuagint, an attitude which was doubtless aggravated by the enthusiastic use of it by the Christians. As a result, new versions were made in the course of the second century by Aquila, Theodotion, and Symmachus (see below).
>
> A short time later Origen became alarmed at the state of the Greek text of the Bible: the latter not only differed considerably from the Hebrew text of the Jews, which he believed to be the original one, but it appeared in a wide range of forms in the manuscripts current among the Christians. His purpose in producing his enormous work known as the Hexapla ("the sixfold," completed in 245 C.E.) was to reconstitute and standardize the "genuine" text of the Septuagint, essential both to sound exegesis and effective apologetics. The Hexapla consisted of six parallel columns, the first – the standard Hebrew text, the second – the same transcribed in Greek characters, the third, fourth, and sixth – the versions of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion respectively; the critical text of the Septuagint compiled by Origen made up the fifth column. It was often recopied separately and enjoyed wide circulation in Palestine. However, it did not become preeminent throughout the Christian world, since, at the end of the fourth century, Jerome referred to the existence of two other recensions, one Egyptian by Hesychius, and the other made in Asia Minor by Lucian. The existence of these three versions might in itself afford a sufficient explanation of the many discrepancies displayed by the Septuagint manuscripts.

The context of the material surrounding the quoted passages does not support the claim made in the missionary tract. Upon reading the entire article, the repeated use of the term "Alexandrian version", a reference to the *Original Septuagint*, is noteworthy, and this should be contrasted against the claim made in the missionary tract, that the entire Hebrew Bible was part of the original translation. Unlike the message that the author of the missionary tract wants to convey to the reader, Professor Daniel's article makes it abundantly clear that she does not support the notion that the *Original Septuagint* ("Alexandrian version") was a Greek translation of the entire Hebrew Bible. Rather, that it

consisted of a Greek translation of only the Torah (Pentateuch), as also noted by both Josephus and St. Jerome, and in the *Letter of Aristeas*, which was pointed out by Professor Daniel.

Conclusion on Exhibit #5: The missionary claim that the *Septuagint* to which Professor Gordon referred is a Jewish document is deceptive and false.

III. SUMMARY

The analysis of the missionary tract "*Does almah mean young woman or virgin?*" presented in this essay demonstrates that all the so-called "evidence" used by its author to convince the reader that the Hebrew word עַלְמָה, as used in the Hebrew Bible, means "a virgin", is false. This result leads to the following observations:

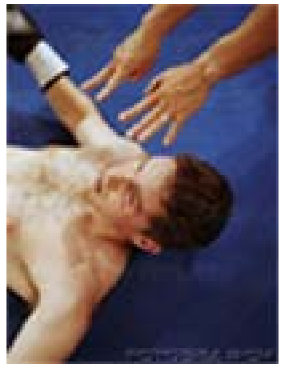
- **Deception is a primary tool of the Christian missionary to the Jews**
- **The deceivers are counting on their readers' trust and, thus, not to verify that -**
  - **Sources are quoted accurately and within proper context**
  - **Cited sources are real and not bogus**
- **The deceivers often give the false impression that they know the Hebrew language**
- **The deceivers violate the Biblical commandments against bearing false witness (Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17)**

Those who blindly trust tracts such as the kind analyzed in this essay and use it to bolster their religious beliefs put themselves at a great risk of being deceived.

It should be noted here that not all those who engage in missionary work are necessarily deliberate deceivers. Some, perhaps even most, are doing their work by rote, i.e., they quote or recite material that they have been given without fully understanding it or the sources from which it was generated. The deceivers are those who create such material and those who propagate it with the knowledge that it is not true. Each claim made by Christian missionaries must be researched and validated and should not be "taken of faith" just because it may sound plausible.

That which needs to be defended with deception is not worth defending at all!

A KNOCK-OUT PUNCH: THE "LAST AND FINAL SACRIFICE" TAKES THE TEN-COUNT[1]



A Boxer Takes the Ten-Count[2]

I. INTRODUCTION

Christian missionaries claim that those who do not accept Jesus as their lord and savior, which includes the Jewish people, are doomed to burn in "hell" because they cannot have their sins forgiven by God. This claim is rationalized with the allegation that, in Biblical times, the only way to bring about the remission of sins was via the blood of a certain animal. This animal had to be brought to the priest to be slaughtered at the altar in the Sanctuary, first while in the portable Sanctuary and later in the Temple, as a sacrificial offering. According to this claim, since there has been no Temple standing in Jerusalem since the year 70 C.E., valid sacrificial offerings can no longer be made and, therefore, the only way for Jews to have their sins forgiven is through the blood shed by Jesus in his "sacrificial" death on the cross. In other words, the claim is that the blood of Jesus, who was allegedly sacrificed by God (the "Father") as a demonstration of his great love for mankind,[3] has once and for all removed the stain of "Original

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:

- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "h̲"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

[2] Original Photo Credit - CB107800 Corbis Royalty Free Photograph, found at the following web-link: http://www.fotosearch.com/comp/corbis/DGT080/CB107800.jpg

[3] John 3:16(KJV) - For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Sin" from those who follow Jesus (the "Son"). This act of love by God allegedly made Jesus the "last and final sacrifice" forever.

There are two main aspects to the claim that Jesus was "the last and final sacrifice". The first concerns the suitability of Jesus and his death as a sacrificial offering for the remission of sins. The second aspect, which was investigated in another essay, concerns the need for blood in the atonement process.[4]

This essay examines the suitability of Jesus and the manner in which he died as a sacrificial offering for the remission of sins.

II. THE CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE VERSUS THE SPECIFICATIONS IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

The process for testing this claim by Christian missionaries consists of contrasting the requirements concerning sacrificial offerings, as specified in the Hebrew Bible, against the accounts in the New Testament that describe the death of Jesus on the cross as a sacrificial offering. As part of this analysis, it is important to bear in mind the following two conditions that existed during the life of Jesus, at the time of his death, and for several decades following his death:

- ⦿ The Second Temple was still standing in Jerusalem
- ⦿ The Hebrew Bible was the Scripture in force

The salient issue to be addressed, and answered, is:

According to the requirements set forth in the Hebrew Bible, was Jesus a valid sacrificial offering, and was his death by crucifixion an acceptable process, for remission of sins?

The analytical phase of the testing process identifies ten elements for which the respective accounts in the New Testament are compared with the specifications provided in the Hebrew Bible, primarily in the Torah.

<u>One</u>

✞ According to the accounts in the New Testament, Jesus was crucified by Roman soldiers:

> **<u>John 19:18,23(KJV)</u> – (18) Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.**
> **(23) Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.** [See also Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:33.]

✡ According to the Levitical Law of Sacrifice in the Torah, the animal brought as a sin sacrifice had to be slaughtered by the person who offered it:

[4] "*<u>Don't Mess with the Blood!</u>*" – http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Blood.pdf

Leviticus 4:27-29 - (27) And if any one person from among the common people sins unwittingly, by performing one of the commandments of the Lord which may not be done, and incurs guilt; (28) Or if his sin, which he has committed, is made known to him, then he shall bring his sacrifice, an unblemished female goat, for his sin which he has sinned. (29) And he shall lay his hand upon the head of the sin offering, and he shall slaughter the sin offering in the place of the burnt offering.

Two

✡ According to the Levitical Law of Sacrifice in the Torah, some of the blood of the (sin) sacrifice had to be rubbed by the priest with his finger on the horns of the altar in the Temple, and the rest had to be poured out at the base of the sacrificial altar. The fat of the sacrifice had to be removed and burnt:

Leviticus 4:30-31 - (30) And the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger, and put [it] upon the horns of the altar [used] for the burnt offering; and [then] he shall pour out all of [the rest of] its blood at the base of the altar. (31) And he shall remove all of its fat, as was removed the fat from the sacrificial peace offerings; and the priest shall burn it upon the altar for a pleasant fragrance to the Lord; and [thus] shall the priest make an atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven.

✞ The New Testament is silent on what was done with the blood of Jesus and with the fat of his body.

Three

✞ According to the accounts in the New Testament, Jesus was beaten, whipped, and dragged on the ground before being crucified:

Matthew 26:67(KJV) - Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, [See also Mark 14:65; Luke 22:63; John 18:22.]

Matthew 27:26,30-31(KJV) – (26)Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.
(30) And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. (31) And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him. [See also Mark 15:15-20; John 19:1-3.]

✡ According to the Torah, a sacrificial animal had to be without any physical defects or blemishes:

Deuteronomy 17:1 - You shall not sacrifice to the Lord your God an ox or a sheep that has in it a blemish or any bad thing, for that is an abomination to the Lord, your God.

Sidebar Note: As a born Jew, Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day following his birth, a ritual that leaves a scar (Genesis 17:10-13; the "sign of the covenant"). The circumcision of Jesus is mentioned in the New Testament (Luke 2:21), yet Paul refers to circumcision as being tantamount to mutilation (Galatians 5:11-12; Philippians 3:2).

Four

✝ According to the New Testament, Jesus was "*the Lamb of God*" whose bones may not be broken [a reference to the *Paschal Lamb* of Exodus 12:46 and Numbers 9:12]:

John 1:29(KJV) – The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

John 19:36(KJV) - For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.

✡ According to the Torah, the *Paschal Lamb* was not offered for the removal of sins. Rather, it was a festive, or commemorative, offering. Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) would have been a more appropriate time for a sin offering:

Numbers 29:11 - One young male goat for a sin offering, beside the sin offering of atonement, and the continual burnt offering, and its meal offering, and their drink offerings. [Yom Kippur – Individual sin offering]

Leviticus 16:15 - He shall then slaughter the he goat of the people's sin offering and bring its blood inside the dividing curtain, and he shall do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull and sprinkle it upon the cover of the ark, and before the cover of the ark. [Yom Kippur – Communal sin offering]

Five

✡ According to the Torah, the *Paschal Lamb* had to be slaughtered and its blood used to place markings on the side-posts and lintels of the entrances to the dwelling. Moreover, the meat had to be roasted and eaten, and whatever was not consumed by the time the Israelites were to leave their homes, had to be burnt and destroyed:

Exodus 12:6-10 - (6) And you shall keep it under watch until the fourteenth day of this month; and the entire congregation of the community of Israel shall slaughter it at dusk. (7) And they shall take [some] of its blood, and place it on the two doorposts and on the lintel, on the houses in which they will eat it. (8) And they shall eat the meat in that night, roasted over fire, and [with] unleavened bread; with bitter herbs they shall eat it. (9) You shall not eat from it raw, nor boiled in water; but roasted over fire, its head with its legs, and with its inner parts. (10) And you shall not leave any of it until morning; and that which left over until the morning you shall burn in the fire.

✝ According to the accounts in the New Testament this was not done with Jesus after his death. In fact, Jesus was buried.

Matthew 27:57-60(KJV) – (57) When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: (58) He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. (59) And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, (60) And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. [See also Mark 15:42-46; Luke 23:50-53; John 19:38-42.]

Six

✞ According to the New Testament, the death of Jesus was a sacrificial offering that expiated the sins of mankind for all times:

Hebrews 10:10,18(KJV) – (10) By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.
(18) Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. [See also Romans 6:10; Hebrews 9:12.]

✡ According to the Torah, the Passover (sin) sacrifice, a male-goat, had to be offered on an individual (per household) basis, not as a communal offering:

Numbers 28:22 - And one young male goat for a sin offering, to make atonement for you.

Seven

✞ According to the New Testament, the death and blood of Jesus took care of (almost) all sins:

Hebrews 9:22(KJV) – And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

✡ According to the Levitical Law of Sacrifice in the Torah, the sacrificial sin offering brought atonement only for *unintentional* sins, except as noted in Leviticus 5:1-6, 20-26[Leviticus 5:1-6, 6:1-7 in Christian Bibles]:

Numbers 15:27-31 - (27) And if a person sins inadvertently, then he shall offer a female goat in its first year as a sin offering. (28) And the priest shall atone for the erring person who sinned inadvertently before the Lord in order to make atonement on his behalf; and it shall be forgiven him. (29) For the native born of the children of Israel and the stranger who resides among them, one law shall apply to him who sins inadvertently. (30) And the person who does anything presumptuously, whether he is a native born or a stranger, that person blasphemes the Lord; and that person shall be cut off from among his people. (31) Because he has scorned the word of the Lord, and has violated his commandment; that person shall surely be cut off, for his iniquity is upon him.

Eight

✞ According to the New Testament, the death of Jesus brought about the remission of sins yet uncommitted, and of sins of those yet to be born:

Hebrews 10:18(KJV) – Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

✡ According to the Levitical Law of Sacrifice in the Torah, sacrifices could bring atonement only for sins committed prior to the offering of the sacrifice. No sacrifice was provided for the atonement of sins committed after the sacrifice

was offered and, thus, no sacrifice can bring atonement for sins of people born after it was offered. This includes both חַטָּאת (***h**ATAT*)], **a sin offering**, described in Leviticus 4:1-5:13, and אָשָׁם (***ASHAM***), **a guilt offering**, described in Leviticus 5:14-26. Had there been, among the listed sacrifices, even one kind of sin or guilt offering that could bring atonement for future sins, the person who would have offered that particular sacrifice would not have had to do so again for the rest of his life. Moreover, Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), which is ordained by the Torah as an annual Holy Day (Leviticus 16:29-34), would have had to be celebrated by the Israelites only the very first time after the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai, had they used one of those "super" sacrificial offerings that could atone for sins of the future.[5]

The claim by the author of Hebrews, that there are no more sin offerings required following the death of Jesus, is false for other reasons as well:

- **The Second Temple stood in Jerusalem for nearly 40 years following the death of Jesus, during which time literally thousands of animals were offered as sacrifices of all sorts, including sin and guilt offerings, as prescribed by the Torah.**
- **The Hebrew Bible contains prophecies about the building of the Third Temple in the messianic era, and of the resumption of the sacrificial system at that time. All the types of sacrificial offerings described in the Hebrew Bible will be made on the sacrificial altar [מִזְבֵּחַ (*mizBE'ah*)] in the Temple, including both the חַטָּאת and אָשָׁם sacrificial offerings. In other words, the sacrificial system, which has been in a state of suspension since the year 70 C.E., when the Romans destroyed the Second Temple, will be completely restored in the messianic era:**

Ezekiel 43:21-22 - And you shall take the bull of the sin offering, and he [the priest] shall burn it at the edge of the Temple, outside the Sanctuary. (22) And on the second day you shall offer an unblemished he-goat for a sin offering, and they [the priests] shall purify the altar as they purified it with the bull. [See also: Isaiah 56:7; Jeremiah 33:17-18; Ezekiel 40:39,46-47, 41:42, 42:13, 43:13,15,18-19,22,25-27, 44:27,29, 45:17,19,22-23,25, 46:20, 47:1; Zechariah 14:21.]

Nine

✞ According to the New Testament, God's "only begotten son" died on the cross for the sins of mankind, and all who accept this belief are "saved" (i.e., get salvation) and will go to heaven:

Romans 5:8-11(KJV) – (8) But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. (10) For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.(11) And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. [See also Acts 10:43; 1Corinthians 15:3; 1Peter 3:18.]

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[5] Consequently, even if Jesus were some kind of a "super- sacrifice", one that atoned for all sins of mankind, his death could have brought the remission of sins committed only prior to his crucifixion.

✡ The Hebrew Bible strictly prohibits (human) vicarious atonement, and mandates that everyone is responsible for his or her own sins:[6]

Deuteronomy 24:16 - Fathers shall not be put to death because of children, nor shall children be put to death for fathers; each person shall be put to death for his own sin. [See also Exodus 32:31-33; Numbers 35:33.]

Ten

✞ According to the New Testament, Jesus was "God manifest in the flesh" (this would make it a human sacrifice):

Romans 8:3(KJV) - For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: [See also 1Timothy 3:16; 1John 4:2.]

✡ The Hebrew Bible strictly prohibits human sacrifices. The concept of human sacrifices to a deity is foreign to Judaism. Human sacrifice is a pagan rite:

Leviticus 18:21 – And you shall not give any of your offspring to pass through the fire for Molech, and shall not profane the name of your God; I am the Lord. [See also Deuteronomy 18:10; Jeremiah 7:31, 19:32; Ezekiel 23:37-39.]

The results obtained from the analysis are summarized in Table IV-1.

Table II-1 – The "Last and Final Sacrifice": The New Testament versus the Hebrew Bible

#	On the subject of …	✞ The New Testament says* …	✡ The Hebrew Bible says* …	Valid?
1	**Who must slaughter the sin offering?**	**Jesus was crucified by Roman soldiers.**	The person who brings it.	**No**
2	**What is done with the blood and fat of the sin offering?**	Nothing. The New Testament is silent on what was done with the blood of Jesus and with the fat of his body.	**Some of the blood is rubbed by the priest with his finger on the horns of the altar in the Temple, and the rest is poured at the foot of the sacrificial altar. The fat is removed, placed on the altar by the priest, and burned.**	**No**
3	**What must be the physical condition of an animal being offered as a sacrifice?**	**Jesus was beaten, whipped, and dragged on the ground before being crucified. Would such treatment leave a body without blemishes and scars?**	The sacrificial animal has to be without any physical defects or blemishes.	**No**
4	**Was the Paschal Lamb a sin offering?**	**Jesus was called "the Lamb of God".**	No. The Paschal Lamb was a festive, or commemorative, offering, not a sin offering.	**No**

[6] This Christian belief also contradicts the words of those who were inspired by God throughout the rest of the Hebrew Bible:

2Kings 14:6 - And the sons of the assassins he did not execute, as it is written in the book of the Torah of Moses, which the Lord commanded saying: "Fathers shall not be put to death for sons, nor shall sons be put to death for fathers, but each man shall be put to death for his own sin." [See also Jeremiah 31:29{30 in Christian Bibles}; Ezekiel 18:4,20; Psalms 49:7-8.]

5	**What is to be done with the Paschal Lamb?**	Nothing. The New Testament is silent on whether this was done with Jesus following his death.	**The Paschal Lamb had to be slaughtered and its blood used for placing markings on the side-posts and lintel of the doors of the house. Its meat had to be roasted and eaten. Any leftovers at the time the Israelites were to leave their homes, had to be burnt.**	**No**
6	**What is unique about the sin sacrifice to be offered on Passover?**	**The death of Jesus, termed a sin sacrifice, expiated the sins of mankind.**	The Passover sin sacrifice, a male-goat, has to be offered on an individual basis, not as a communal offering.	**No**
7	**For which sins can the sin sacrifice bring atonement?**	**The death of Jesus on the cross took care of all sins.**	Except as noted, the sacrificial sin offering can atone only for unintentional sins.	**No**
8	**What is the span of time for which sin (and guilt) offerings can bring atonement?**	**The death of Jesus atoned for sins of the past, present and future, and for sins of those born after the crucifixion.**	Sin and guilt offerings can atone only for sins committed prior to the offering of the sacrifice.	**No**
9	**Can one person take on the sins of another and thereby have atonement granted to the sinner?**	**God had His "only begotten son" die on a cross for the sins of the people, and all who accept this belief are "saved" and will partake in the heavenly kingdom.**	Human vicarious atonement is strictly prohibited. Each person is accountable for his or her own sins.	**No**
10	**Can a human being serve as a sacrificial offering of any kind?**	**Jesus, as "God manifest in the flesh", was a human sacrifice when he died on the cross.**	Human sacrifice is strictly prohibited.	**No**

***** Entries shown in **bold font** indicate the "lead-off" item under the specific count number.

Clearly, the accounts in the New Testament violate the Hebrew Bible on all ten counts.

The "Last & Final Sacrifice"
<u>Takes the Ten-count</u>



III. SUMMARY

The analysis of the missionary claim that Jesus was "the last and final sacrifice" demonstrates that, according to the specifications provided in the Torah, Jesus could not have served as a valid sacrificial offering of any kind. Any one of the above ten "counts" would render a sacrifice unfit for the atonement of sins.

Those who choose to accept the belief that Jesus died for their sins, must understand and realize that such a belief is not supported by the Hebrew Bible. The notion that one person can take on, suffer, and die for the sins of another was introduced into Christianity via the New Testament and has, therefore, no place in, nor relevance to, Judaism. The dilemma facing those who accept the Christian Bible as their Scriptures is that the two “halves” of their Bible contradict each other – the New Testament contradicts the Christian “Old Testament” on this particular doctrine as well as on other elements of Christian theology.

WILL A BRIDE CIRCLE A GROOM, OR A DIVINE BABY FORM IN A VIRGIN'S WOMB?[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of the "Virgin Birth" is a foundational "building block" of Christian theology. The monumental significance of this doctrine stems from the fact that it "touches" the other important doctrinal elements of Christianity since it establishes the deity of Jesus and confirms his identity as "God manifest in the flesh". To Christians, if Jesus were not "God", then his sacrificial death for their sins would be a meaningless act, because an imperfect man could not have died for their sins – his death could not have appeased God's demand for justice following the so-called "Fall of Man" in the Garden of Eden. Consequently, it is evident that Christian theology would literally fall apart if the doctrine of the "Virgin Birth" were removed from it. This fact has served as the primary motivation for the unrelenting efforts by Christian apologists, for nearly 20 centuries, to develop arguments that aim to defend this doctrine. These efforts consisted primarily of locating so-called "proof texts" in the Christian "Old Testament" that could be used to support this important doctrine. Some sources cite as many as 10 such passages, three of which serve as the most common defenses of the "Virgin Birth" of Jesus.

The first and most widely used of these "proof text", Isaiah 7:14, was a natural choice since this verse is invoked, albeit incorrectly, by the author of the Gospel of Matthew in his account of the conception and birth of Jesus (Matthew 1:18-25).[2] The next most popular passage, Genesis 3:15, required a some additional "work", since the authors of the New Testament never refer to it, nor quote it, in relation to the "Virgin Birth".[3] The alleged connection of Genesis 3:15 has with the "Virgin Birth" is based on a false premise; namely, that the account of Eve's seed striking

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:

- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "h̲"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע – ***SHVA NA***) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

[2] For a detailed analysis of Isaiah 7:14, see the essays, *Isaiah 7:14 - PART 1: An Accurate Grammatical Analysis* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Isa714_1.pdf and *Isaiah 7:14 - PART 2: Refutation of Christian Apologetics* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Isa714_2.pdf

[3] In the New American Standard Bible (NASB), both Luke 24:27 and Revelation 12:17 cross-reference this verse, though the connection with a "Virgin Birth" is elusive.

the head of the serpent's seed is a prophecy about Jesus, the "seed of a woman", defeating the "devil", of whom the serpent is a metaphor.[4]

In this essay, the third most commonly applied passage in defense of the "Virgin Birth", Jeremiah 31:21[22], is examined.[5] A detailed analysis of this verse in its proper context and accurate translation demonstrates that there is no basis for its claimed connection to the "Virgin Birth".

II. The Verse Jeremiah 31:21[22]

The Hebrew text of the verse Jeremiah 31:21[22] along with its corresponding Jewish and King James Version translations are shown in Table II-1.

Table II-1 – Jeremiah 31:21[22]

Source	Passage Citation	Text
תנ״ך **[T^e^NACH – Hebrew Bible]**	ירמיהו לא,כא	עַד־מָתַי תִּתְחַמָּקִין הַבַּת הַשּׁוֹבֵבָה כִּי־בָרָא יהוה חֲדָשָׁה בָּאָרֶץ נְקֵבָה תְּסוֹבֵב גָּבֶר׃
Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	**Jeremiah 31:21**	How long will you hide, O backsliding daughter? For the Lord has created a new thing [or, novelty] on the earth, a woman [or, female] shall encircle a man.
King James Version "Old Testament"	**Jeremiah 31:22**	How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man.

The two translations are reasonably consistent. The highlighted portion of the text is the focus of the analysis that follows.

III. The Christian Perspective

By infusing a significant amount of Christology into their interpretations of Jeremiah 31, Christian missionaries assert that the coming of Jesus and the "New Covenant" are prophesied in the chapter. Specifically, the claim is that Jeremiah 31:21[22] speaks of something new that results from an act of creation by God, and is not the outcome of anything done by man; something that had never before been witnessed on earth – that a woman will conceive a child in an unusual manner. The assertion here is that the phrase "**A woman shall compass a man**" is a metaphor that figuratively describes a woman conceiving a male child, but not via sexual intercourse with a man. To support this claim, Christian missionaries also misapply

[4] The "seed of a woman" is claimed to imply a conception by a woman that did not involve her insemination by a mortal man. For a detailed analysis, see the essay, *Genesis 3:15 – The "Seed of A Woman": A Kernel of Deception* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Gen315.pdf

[5] In cases where verse numbers differ between the Hebrew Bible and the Christian "Old Testament", the citation shows the verse number in the Hebrew Bible followed by the verse number in the Christian "Old Testament" in brackets. Example: Jeremiah 31:21[22].

an earlier verse, Jeremiah 31:14[15], a verse that is "quoted" by the author of the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 2:18) as a prophecy that was fulfilled in the birth of Jesus.[6]

Two main arguments are generally used to justify this interpretation. First, it is suggested that there are similarities between this alleged prophecy of the "Virgin Birth" and the earlier Isaiah 7:14. The claim is that both passages tell of a great and wondrous feat that will be caused at God's behest, that they refer to an unborn male child being in his mother's womb, and that they both allude to a man's dependence on a woman.

The other argument is based on speculations concerning the application of some Hebrew terminology in the verse. Specifically, it is claimed that the verb בָּרָא (***baRA***), **[he] created**, was used ostensibly to denote a divine act of creating something out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) rather than making or forming something out of existing matter. It is also claimed that the use of the noun נְקֵבָה (***n^{e}qeiVAH***), **a [generic] female**, is an uncommon reference to **a woman** in the Hebrew Bible as compared with the noun אִשָּׁה (***iSHAH***), which is the common application. Accordingly, it must have been used here for a special reason. Similarly, the claim continues with the assertion that the use of the noun גָּבֶר (***GAver***) [a variant of the noun גֶּבֶר (***GEver***)], **a man**, is unusual as compared with the noun אִישׁ (***ISH***), which is the common application.[7] Accordingly, it must also have a special significance.

The Christian missionary argument combines these points and turns the verse into a prophecy that foretells the advent of a new creation by God – the "Virgin Birth", the miracle of an earthly woman who will conceive through an act of divine creation in which she maintains her virginity and holds in her womb a male child. This child will be born and will turn into a mighty man, Jesus, claimed to be God manifest in the flesh.

IV. The Jewish Perspective

Chapters 30 and 31 in the Book of Jeremiah are messianic texts with oracles of consolation for Israel. They offer comfort and hope for the future via a prophetic theme of a national redemption and restoration for Israel, which envisions the return of the exiles to the Land of Israel. This heartening message of hope and encouragement to the Jewish people in their darkest times, as well as a message about the efficacy of repentance, are likely to be the reasons that a portion of this text found its way into the Jewish liturgy. The passage Jeremiah 31:1-19 was selected by the Sages in the 2nd century B.C.E. as a substitute for the designated

[6] The failure of Matthew 2:18 as a fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:14[15] is discussed in another essay, *Matthew 2: Is it False or Is it True?* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Mt2FalseTrue.pdf

[7] Depending on the specific context of a passage, גֶּבֶר can also mean **a hero**, **a [generic] male**, **a powerful man**, **a valiant man**, **a virile man**. Nothing in the context of Jeremiah 31:21[22] indicates that anything other than the meaning, **a man**, is called for.

portion from the Torah that was to be read in public on the second day of ***Rosh haShanah***.[8,9] It is a most appropriate theme for the start of the period of the ten days of awe and penitence that commence on ***Rosh haShanah*** and end on ***Yom Kippur***.

Though Jeremiah 31:21[22] is not part of the liturgical passage noted above, the verse is still part of the overall theme. According to one interpretation, it metaphorically points at the future reconciliation of Israel with God. In fact, it is the last verse in a passage that speaks of the restoration of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Jeremiah 31:1-19[2-20]; the restoration of the Kingdom of Judah is addressed in Jeremiah 31:23-25[24-26]). The Northern Kingdom of Israel, which was exiled and widely dispersed due to its falling into idolatry, will not hesitate nor waver in its people's ***tshuvah*** (**return to God**).

The same interpretation also follows from the literal reading of this verse. Whereas in courtship it is customary for a man to court a woman, the newly created phenomenon will see a role-reversal where a woman will court a man. With God often portrayed in the Hebrew Bible as "Husband" of Israel (e.g., Isaiah 50:1; Jeremiah 31:31[32]; Hosea 2:18), Jeremiah foretells that Israel will eventually repent and seek God.

The prophet Hosea describes a similar scenario:

> **<u>Hosea 3:4-5</u> – (4) For the people of Israel shall remain many days without a king, and without a nobleman, and without a sacrifice, and without a pillar, and without an ephod, and without teraphim; (5) Afterwards, shall the people of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God and David their king; and they shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the end of days.**

The reference to "the end of days" here points to the messianic era.

<u>An anecdotal note</u>: A well-known custom, the origin of which is commonly attributed to Jeremiah 31:21[22], is followed in traditional Jewish wedding ceremonies, where the bride circles (walks around) the groom under the חֻפָּה (***<u>h</u>upah***), **wedding canopy**, before the officiating Rabbi begins the formal wedding ceremony. The bride will make either three or seven circles around the groom, depending on which particular tradition the respective families follow, and various symbolisms are associated with the circling as well as with the number of revolutions. For example, in some traditions the circling symbolizes the shift in the bride's commitment priorities from her parents to her husband, and there are other symbolisms. In some traditions the 7 rounds recall the 7 times the *T'filin* strap is wrapped around a man's arm symbolically binding himself in love to God and, again, there are others. The tradition of 3 revolutions comes from Hosea 2:21-22 where God says to the Jewish

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[8] In some Jewish editions this is Jeremiah 31:2-20, where Chapter 31 starts with what is normally Jeremiah 30:25. This is also the way the chapter is numbered in Christian Bibles.
[9] During the period in which the Land of Israel was under Greek occupation, the reading of Torah was prohibited by the then ruling Greek authorities. Following the defeat of the Greeks by the Maccabees, public reading of Torah was commenced, and the parallel readings from Prophets have remained part of the Jewish tradition ever since.

people: “I will betroth you to Me forever; and I will betroth you to Me with righteousness and with justice and with loving-kindness and with mercy; and I will betroth you to Me with faith”. A man recites this passage at the beginning of the weekday morning service while wrapping the *T’filin* strap of the hand 3 times around the middle finger after donning the head *T’filin*.

V. WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION?

The Christian interpretation of Jeremiah 31:21[22] as a so-called "proof text" for the "Virgin Birth" is riddled with serious flaws that are discussed below.

A. Lack of support from the New Testament

The authors of the New Testament never refer to Jeremiah 31:21[22], which implies that its usage as a "proof text" came later on. This is similar to the case of Genesis 3:15 (which, unlike Jeremiah 31:21[22], is referenced in the New Testament), in that the "seed of a woman" argument was fashioned at a later time to defend the claim that the "Virgin Birth" is foretold in the Hebrew Bible. Perhaps, as the work of the Jewish polemicists started to take its toll, Christian theologians felt the need to bolster the foundations on which the Christian interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 was resting.

B. Misapplication and misinterpretation of Hebrew terminology

An analysis of the Hebrew terminology and its proper usage in the Hebrew Bible reveals how, in fashioning their argument, Christian apologists not only misapply the meanings of key Hebrew words in this verse, they also read into them various ideas that the text does not contain.

- ✞ **Christian Claim:** The Hebrew verb בָּרָא is used here for a special reason, which is to signal the advent of a future miracle from God, something that never occurred in past.

- ✡ **Jewish Response:** The verb בָּרָא is applied in the Hebrew Bible on 48 occasions. In all instances, the reference is to something that God created or formed, though it does not exclusively apply to *ex nihilo* creations, as the following examples demonstrate:

  Isaiah 43:1,7 – (1) And now, so said the Lord, your Creator [בֹּרַאֲךָ (*bora'aCHA*)], O Jacob, and the One Who formed you [וְיֹצֶרְךָ (*v*^e*yotserCHA*)], O Israel, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you, and I called by your name, you are Mine.
  (7) Everyone that is called by My name, and from My glory I created him [בְּרָאתִיו (*braTIV*)], I formed him [יְצַרְתִּיו (*y*^e*tsarTIV*)], I made him [עֲשִׂיתִיו (*asiTIV*)] too.

  Isaiah 45:7 – Who forms [יוֹצֵר (*yoTSER*)] light and creates [וּבוֹרֵא (*u'voRE*)] darkness, Who makes [עֹשֶׂה (*oSEH*)] peace and creates [וּבוֹרֵא] evil; I am the Lord, Who makes all these.

Isaiah 65:18 – But rejoice and exult forever [in] what I create [בּוֹרֵא (*VORE*)], for behold I create [בּוֹרֵא] Jerusalem a rejoicing and its people an exultation.

Amos 4:13 – For behold, He forms [יוֹצֵר] mountains and creates [וּבֹרֵא (*u'VORE*)] the wind, and declares to man what his speech is; He makes [עֹשֵׂה] dawn into darkness, and treads on the high places of the earth; the Lord God of Hosts is His Name.

Clearly, not all applications indicate and refer to *ex nihilo* creative acts. In fact, when something is the result of an act of God, these verbs appear to be used interchangeably, as demonstrated in the following verses:

Genesis 1:27 - And God created [וַיִּבְרָא (*va'yivRA*)] *man* in His image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Genesis 2:7 - And the Lord God formed [וַיִּיצֶר (*va'yiTSER*)] *man* of dust from the ground, and He breathed into his nostrils the soul of life, and man became a living soul.

The same idea is also demonstrated in the following verse:

Jeremiah 10:16 - Not like these is Jacob's portion, for He is the One Who forms [יוֹצֵר] *everything*, and Israel is the tribe of His inheritance; the Lord of Hosts is His name." [See also Jeremiah 51:19.]

Therefore, the claimed "special" reason for Jeremiah's use of the verb בָּרָא in Jeremiah 31:21[22] has no support in the Hebrew Bible.

The reference to that which will be created is חֲדָשָׁה (***hadasHAH***), the exact form of which appears in the Hebrew Bible on 20 occasions (3 times with the definite article and 17 times in the indefinite form). Although this term is applied as an adjective in most instances, it is also used in the Hebrew Bible as a noun, meaning **a new thing** or **a novelty**. The two cases of interest to the present analysis are those in which some action by God causes "a new thing" to occur, namely, Jeremiah 31:21[22] and this verse:

Isaiah 43:19 - Behold I am making a new thing [עֹשֶׂה חֲדָשָׁה (*OSEH hadasHAH*)], now it will sprout, indeed you shall know it; I will also place a road in the desert, rivers in the wasteland.

Here, too, God will cause something to take place that has not existed in the past – plants will sprout in the desert, a road will pass through it, and rivers will flow in it.

✞ **Christian Claim:** The application of the uncommon noun נְקֵבָה to denote **a woman** carries a special significance – it refers to "a virgin".

✡ **Jewish Response:** This noun appears in the Hebrew Bible on 22 occasions, all of which are in the context of **a [generic] female**. A study of these 22 applications reveals that the noun is used in reference to "a woman" on 13 occasions, and in nine cases to "a female" of clean animals of the kind that could be used for sacrificial offerings. Consequently, the noun נְקֵבָה does not mean "a virgin". This idea is not present in the text; rather, the claimed "significance" has been read into it.

✞ **Christian Claim:** The use of **[she] shall compass**, since it speaks of "a virgin" who is pregnant, is a reference to her womb that contains the fetus.

✡ **Jewish Response:** The interpretation of "compassing" as a woman's womb holding a fetus is contrived since none of the 162 applications in the Hebrew Bible of the verb לָסֹב\לִסְבֹּב (***lasov/lisBOV***), **to encircle**, **to surround**, **to encompass**, refers to a female's womb, neither in a literal sense nor as a metaphor. The verb in Jeremiah 31:21[22], תְּסוֹבֵב (***t^esovEV***), **[she] shall encircle**, is a conjugation of the verb in the singular, 3rd-person, feminine, future tense. Clearly, the Christian claim reads into the text a meaning that is not present in it.

✞ **Christian Claim:** The use of גֶּבֶר is unusual and indicates the future advent of "a special man", "a mighty man". Given the special significance attributed to the other elements in this verse, the reference here must be to the "mighty man" Jesus – "God" manifest in the flesh.

✡ **Jewish Response:** The nouns גֶּבֶר and גֶּבֶר appear in the Hebrew Bible (both in the singular and plural) a combined 66 times. None of the 66 applications assigns this noun to God, nor do any of the cases indicate some "familial" relationship of the man to God. Quite to the contrary, the usage generally describes a mortal man, such as shown by the following examples:

> **Proverbs 28:31 - To be partial is not good, but for a piece of bread a man [גֶּבֶר] will sin.**
>
> **Job 14:10 - And a man [גֶּבֶר] will die and he is weakened; man perishes and where is he?**
>
> **Lamentations 3:39 - Why should a living man complain? A man [גֶּבֶר] for his sins!**

The theological problem that Christianity incurs by referring to Jesus as גֶּבֶר is obvious: it renders him a mortal man and a sinner. Once again, the claim reads into the text something that is not there.

Conclusion: The correct reading and interpretation of the Hebrew text of Jeremiah 31:21[22] do not support the claims by Christian missionaries.

VI. SUMMARY

Although Jeremiah 31:21[22] is not as widely used to support the "Virgin Birth" as is Isaiah 7:14, together with Genesis 3:15 it forms the primary "backup portfolio" of "proof texts" for the "Virgin Birth". It is noteworthy that, while the New Testament points to Isaiah 7:14 as a prophecy fulfilled in the "Virgin Birth" of Jesus (Matthew 1:20-23), and refers to Genesis 3:15 for reasons unrelated to the "Virgin Birth", Jeremiah 31:21[22] is never invoked or alluded to by any of the New Testament authors. This fact alone weakens the argument, and it also shows this so-called "proof text" was designed *ex post facto* for defending this doctrine, as is also the case with Genesis 3:15.

The analysis of the Hebrew terminology clearly demonstrated that the Christian missionary claims about this verse are based on mistranslation, misinterpretation, and the imputation of meanings to the Hebrew text that simply do not exist within it.

Judaism and Christianity – The Twain Shall Never Meet[1]

I. Introduction

The idea for this essay was inspired by a very succinct and effective presentation of the differences between Christianity and Judaism prepared by Jews for Judaism.[2] Another factor that contributed to the writing of this essay is the need to respond to the common claim by some Christians, who refer to themselves as "Messianic Jews", that they are practicing Torah Judaism and not Christianity.

A variety of opinions exists on the similarities and differences between Judaism and Christianity. The general trend among all these opinions is that, although there are some similarities between the two faiths, many more differences separate them. The similarities are cultural in their nature, whereas the differences stem from diametrically opposite theologies.

Many people think that the only difference between Jews and Christians centers around Jesus, that Christians believe Jesus is the Messiah, but the Jews do not. The problem with this understanding is that it does not take into account the full scope of the theology on which is based the belief that Jesus is the Messiah. The disparity between the two theologies becomes evident when their major elements are contrasted.

This essay explores several major differences between Judaism and Christianity.

II. Comparing the Two Theologies

Several of the key elements Judaism and Christianity share as religions, but differ on their specific theological understanding and practice, are compared below.

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:
- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "<u>h</u>"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

[2] *Christianity vs. Judaism: The major differences* - http://www.jewishpassion.com/documents/j_compare.html

SCRIPTURES

The respective scriptures are a logical starting point for a comparison of the two faiths, since in these are contained their foundational principles.

✡ The scripture of Judaism is the Hebrew Bible, which consists of 39 Books that are divided into three sections – תּוֹרָה (***toRAH***, the [Written] Law; also known as the Pentateuch), נְבִיאִים (***n^e^vi'IM***, the Prophets), and כְּתוּבִים (***k'tuVIM***, the Writings; also known as the Hagiographa). The Hebrew acronym for the three parts, תנ״ך, has the pronunciation ***T^e^NACH***, a title that has become a common reference to the Hebrew Bible. The *T^e^NACH* is written almost exclusively in Hebrew, with the exception of portions in the Books of Daniel and Ezra, which are written in Aramaic.[3] Today's *T^e^NACH* represents the Masoretic Text (MT), which is the product of the Masoretes of the 9th and 10th centuries C.E., who reconstructed the canonical Hebrew Bible and added to it vowels and trop markings for the purpose of facilitating and standardizing its reading. The accuracy of the MT, in terms of contextual integrity, has been validated through comparisons with the Dead Sea Scrolls.[4]

According to traditional Judaism, the Torah is God's word as recorded by Moses, and the remainder of the Hebrew Bible consists of inspired works by various persons. In addition to the **Written Torah**, traditional Judaism holds that an **Oral Torah** also originated at Sinai. This oral tradition was eventually codified and recorded in the ***Mishnah*** during the second century C.E., and later expounded on in the ***G^e^mara***, both of which comprise the ***Talmud***. The Oral Torah is part of a living corpus of Jewish Law, ***Halachah***, which is continuously updated by the religious authorities in order to keep it consistent with the laws of the land and with changing times. According to the Sages of the Talmud, the Oral Torah was transmitted in the following fashion before it was recorded:

> **<u>Pirkei Avot 1:1</u> - Moses received the Torah at Sinai and [he] transmitted it to Joshua, and Joshua [transmitted it] to the Elders; [the] Elders [transmitted it] to the Prophets, and [the] Prophets transmitted it to the Men of the Great Assembly.**[5]

The Written Torah contains 613 precepts which form the framework of Judaism, and which are regarded as eternal and of utmost value.[6] The Oral Torah contains details concerning these 613 precepts, which are essential to understanding and observing them.

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3 Written in Aramaic are Daniel 2:4b-7:28 and Ezra 4:8-6:18

4 See, for example, *An Introduction to the Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, Geza Vermes, pp.174-175, Fortress Press (1999); and *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Biblical Integrity* - http://www.apologeticspress.org/rr/rr1995/r&r9504a.htm

5 ***Pirkei Avot***, literally, **Chapters of Our Fathers**, but generally known in English as **Ethics of Our Fathers**, is one of the ten tractates that comprise the Order ***Nezikin*** of the Mishnah

6 A detailed and categorized listing of the 613 precepts is presented here - http://jewfaq.org/613.htm

There are many other written works by the Sages, including the codifications of Judaism by Rabbi Moshe Ben Maimon (RaMBaM; Maimonides), Rabbi Joseph Karo, and others, all of which have had their impact on the practice of Judaism. Traditional Judaism also includes a mystical tradition, known as ***Qabalah*** (often also transliterated as ***Kabbalah***), of which the central written work is the ***Zohar***.

It is important to recognize that the Written Torah defines the framework of Judaism through the set of 613 immutable precepts, whereas the dynamic Halachah shapes the practice of Judaism as time goes on.

✞ The scripture of Christianity, the **Christian Bible**, consists of an **Old Testament** and a **New Testament**. The Christian Old Testament used by the Protestant denominations of Christianity contains the same books as does the Hebrew Bible, though they are not organized in the same way (i.e., Torah, Prophets, Writings), nor do they appear in the same order. The Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, and the Armenian and the Ethiopian Oriental Orthodox Church include in their renditions of the Old Testament several additional books, namely, **Tobit**, **Judith**, **1&2 Maccabees**, **Wisdom of Solomon**, **Ecclesiasticus, Baruch**, which are part of the **apocrypha** in both Judaism and Protestant Christianity. The earliest versions of the Christian Old Testament were Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible known collectively as the **LXX** or **Septuagint**, though the latter is a misnomer, since it was the name of a mid-3rd century B.C.E., no longer extant, translation of <u>only the Torah</u> by 72 bi-lingual Jewish scholars.

The New Testament contains 27 books. The first four books in the New Testament, **The Gospels**, are claimed to be the teachings of Jesus that were recorded long after his death, and which bear the names of four of his disciples. The rest of the New Testament was authored by several other persons, with Paul of Tarsus being the primary author. The New Testament was originally composed in Greek.

Many Christians consider the entire Christian Bible to be "the breathed word" of God. Yet, it is evident that, for Christians, the New Testament supersedes the Old Testament in its authority. Moreover, whereas the Catholic and Orthodox denominations of Christianity include an oral tradition, Protestant Christianity generally adheres to ***sola scriptura***, Latin for **(by) scripture alone**, the idea of the singular authority of scripture. In other words, scripture (the Bible) is the only infallible rule to be used for deciding issues of faith and customs that involve doctrines. In effect, this practice reverses the order of the authority of the Church as it has been followed by the Catholic/Orthodox tradition for many centuries, i.e., that tradition is the interpreter of scripture. In effect, sola scriptura makes scripture the interpreter of tradition.

Early Christian theology developed long before the writing of the New Testament, and it continued to develop and mature through influences from outside of the

New Testament. In other words, unlike the Hebrew Bible, which defines the framework of traditional Judaism, the New Testament does not define Christianity; rather, Christian theology defined the New Testament. This fact is at odds with the idea of sola scriptura – a concept that is absent from the Christian Bible. This also explains the subordination of the Old Testament to the New Testament, which has rendered the 613 precepts in the Torah as non-eternal and of no value to Christianity.

NATURE OF DEITY

✞ The overwhelming majority of those who identify with Christianity believe in the Trinity – a triune godhead consisting of the Father, the Son (who is Jesus), and the Holy Spirit (or Holy Ghost).[7] Due to rather divergent views among Trinitarian Christians, it is difficult to obtain a coherent and uniform explanation of the Trinity. At one end of the spectrum is the description of the three components as being three separate "persons". At the other end of the spectrum is the admission that the Trinity eludes explanations and is a mystery. In between these two extremes rests the description that the Trinity is a "compound unity" – a single entity that has three different personalities or manifestations. The common thread in this spectrum is that all Trinitarians hold the Trinity to be consistent with monotheism, yet, according to the New Testament, each of the three entities that comprise the Trinity has different knowledge, different powers, and different wills, which is a common characteristic of polytheistic religions.

Except for one verse in the New Testament that invokes three such elements, the Trinity itself is never explicitly mentioned therein (highlighting added for emphasis throughout this document unless otherwise noted):

> **Matthew 28:19(KJV) – Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:**

In order to convey the concept of a triune godhead, the verse would have had to be written in the following way:

> **Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of GOD the Father, and of GOD the Son, and of GOD the Holy Ghost:**

Probably the main reason that Christian commentators generally do not point to this verse as a reference to the Trinity is that it is not written in this fashion.

The Trinity is a theological concept that developed over many decades, and which eventually became a formal doctrine of Christianity in 325 C.E., when the Council of Nicea adopted it and included it into the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.[8]

[7] Among the Christian denominations that reject the doctrine of the Trinity are the Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and Unitarians.
[8] See, for example, - http://www.antiochian.org/674

✡ The deity in the Hebrew Bible, the God of Israel, is an indivisible Unity. The first four of RaMBaM's 13 Principles of Faith codify Judaism's concept of God:[9]

1. **God exists**
2. **God is one and unique**
3. **God is incorporeal**
4. **God is eternal**

The credo of traditional Judaism, the ***Sh'ma***, describes God as being One:

> **Deuteronomy 6:4 – Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.**

Since the word "One" in this verse is an adjective, it describes the proper noun "the Lord", which rules out the possibility of a "compound unity". The concept of God as an indivisible unity can also be understood from the following passage:

> **Isaiah 44:6 – So said the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer the Lord of Hosts, "I am first and I am last, and beside Me there is no God."**

The declaration by God, "**I am the first**", indicates that He has no father. When He said, "**I am the last**", it means that He has no begotten son. Finally, when God proclaimed, "**beside me there is no God**", it shows that He does not share His role with any other god or entity – He has no "partners".

MESSIANIC VISION[10]

✡ The Jewish messianic vision is an original concept at the heart of traditional Judaism, and the dream of an eventual redemption is one of its foundations. The cornerstone of the Jewish messianic paradigm was set in Genesis 49, and the full picture was developed primarily through the writings of the prophets.

The messianic paradigm of traditional Judaism is founded on the following two main components:

⊙ **The central figure, מָשִׁיחַ (*maSHI'ah*), who will be in the leadership role, and whose actions will result in major changes to world conditions.**

The מָשִׁיחַ, the anointed one, is the individual whose arrival is awaited by the Jewish people. Although he is the central figure in it, the Jewish messianic vision is not focused him; rather, it addresses his achievements. The actions of the מָשִׁיחַ will induce changes in the real world that will transform it into the picture envisioned by the prophets.

[9] See, for example - http://www.ou.org/torah/rambam.htm
[10] A detailed look at the messianic visions of Judaism and Christianity is presented in the essay *Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms: Part 7 – The "Big Picture"* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt7.pdf

The information available in the Hebrew Bible spells out the requirements which a legitimate candidate for the "job" of מָשִׁיחַ must satisfy:

- **He must be a biological descendant, the זֶרַע (*ZEra*), seed, of King David (Isaiah 11:1; Ezekiel 37:24-25)**
- **His lineage to King David must go through King Solomon (2Samuel 7:12-16; 1Kings 8:18-20)**
- **He must be a Jew and Jewish (Deuteronomy 17:15,18-20).**

It follows from these requirements that the מָשִׁיחַ must be born of two human parents – his biological father will transmit to him the lineage to King David, and his biological mother will provide him with his identity as a Jew.

⊙ **The "messianic agenda", which consists of the "action items" (the "messianic prophecies" of Judaism), will be executed and completed for the messianic era to become a reality.**

The messianic vision of Judaism has as its centerpiece a "messianic agenda". This "messianic agenda" consists of prophetic statements which describe, at various level of detail, the conditions that will prevail throughout the messianic era – they represent the output from a nation that was longing for a better life in a better world. The items on the "messianic agenda" comprise the collection of "messianic prophecies" in traditional Judaism. These include handful of significant "messianic agenda items" that will have global impact, as well as few additional "messianic agenda items" that deal with situations, conditions, and events which are of a more local and particular nature with regard to the Jewish people and the land of Israel.

This collection of Jewish "messianic prophecies" is exhaustive and exclusive, which means that, when they are fulfilled, "faith" will not be required in order to experience the impact of their presence – everyone will know it.

✞ Although Christianity has adopted Judaism's idea that the Messiah will be a descendant of King David, the Christian messianic paradigm is inconsistent with its Jewish counterpart in all other aspects.

The common messianic paradigm of Christianity is founded on the following two main components::

⊙ **The central figure, Messiah, already came once in fulfillment of prophetic statements in the Christian "Old Testament", and will return at a future time.**

The most striking feature of the Christian messianic paradigm is that, by design and unlike Judaism, it is entirely focused on the central figure, Jesus.

According to Christian theology, the nature and mission of the Messiah is that he is both Lord and Savior:

- **Jesus is divine since he has always existed as part of the divine godhead (John 1:1-2).[11]**
- **Jesus was "sent to earth" in the form of a man (God manifest in the flesh) via the "Virgin Birth", thus making him the "Son of God" (Matthew 1:23; Mark 1:1).**
- **Jesus came as the Messiah in order to redeem (or save) humanity by removing the stain of the "Original Sin" through his sacrificial death on the cross (2Timothy 1:9-10; 1John 4:14).**
- **In his "Second Coming", Jesus will reign over the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 5:19, 7:21; Hebrews 9:28).**

In his role as Lord and Savior, Jesus is said to have fulfilled all the prophecies about him in the Christian "Old Testament".

⦿ **The "messianic prophecies" were fulfilled by the Messiah in his "First Coming".**

According to the Christian view, "messianic prophecy" consists of texts from the Christian "Old Testament" which are claimed to deal with the coming of the Messiah at some time in the future, and which were allegedly fulfilled in the person of Jesus, as related through the accounts in the New Testament.

The "messianic prophecies" of Christianity, which number literally in the hundreds, are Messiah-centric, i.e., they deal with the Messiah's origin, his attributes, his personal life's ordeals, and his death and resurrection. This is likely to be a result of the belief by Christians that God, via His direct intervention in human history, made His will and purpose known to mankind when He sent His "Son", Jesus, to fulfill these "messianic prophecies". Thus, for Christians, the concept of "messianic prophecy" is the product of a "new revelation", and that the last word on the meaning of specific "messianic prophecies" in the Christian "Old Testament", accordingly, is found in the New Testament and in Jesus himself. For Christians, the Messiah already came and fulfilled all these "messianic prophecies", and they are now awaiting his return in a "Second Coming".

ATTITUDE TOWARD OTHER BELIEFS

✞ Christianity is exclusive in that it claims to hold the monopoly on "The Truth". Accordingly, there is only a single "path to God (the Father)", i.e., having been made righteous by the blood of Jesus, only Christians are "saved" and have earned a place in "heaven":

Luke 13:23-27(KJV) – (23) Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, (24) Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto

[11] The overwhelming majority of Christians adhere to the doctrine of the Trinity, though some denominations do not accept the notion of a triune godhead.

you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. (25) When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: (26) Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. (27) But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.

John 14:6(KJV) - Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

This defines a very exclusive "club", indeed.

✡ According to Judaism, more than one "path to God" exists, perhaps with the Jewish path being the most difficult. Accordingly, all righteous people, Jew and Gentile alike, have a place in the world to come. The Covenant of the Rainbow, which God made with Noah and his descendants (Genesis 9:1-17) affirms this, and the righteousness of Noah is acknowledged in the Hebrew Bible:

Genesis 6:9 - These are the generations of Noah, Noah was a righteous man he was perfect in his generations; Noah walked with God.

The prophet Ezekiel acknowledges Noah's righteousness along with that of Job, two Gentiles, and Daniel, a Jew:

Ezekiel 14:12-14 – (12) Then the word of the Lord came, saying: (13) "Son of man, if a land sins against Me by trespassing grievously, I shall stretch forth My hand upon it and break its staff of bread, and I shall send famine upon it and cut off from it [both] man and beast. (14) And if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would save themselves with their righteousness," says the Lord God. [See also the verses immediately following this passage, vs. 15-20, in which this message is repeated.]

One manifestation of the Jewish perspective is the fact that Judaism does not proselytize among the Gentiles. According to Judaism, Gentiles who follow the Seven Laws of Noah are known as **Righteous Gentiles**, or ***B'nei No'ah***, and they have a place in the world to come.[12]

Sin(fulness), Atonement, and Righteousness

✝ Christianity espouses the doctrine of "Original Sin", which holds that human beings are born inherently sinful, i.e., people are born in a state of sin. This belief is rooted in the following passage:

Genesis 3:17-19(KJV) – (17) And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; (18) Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; (19) In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat

[12] These seven statutes, formulated through Rabbinic interpretation, are based on the verses shown, respectively: [1] The prohibition of murder (Genesis 9:6). [2] The prohibition of idolatry (Genesis 4:26). [3] The prohibition of blasphemy (Geneses 4:26). [4] The prohibition of sexual misconduct, especially incest (Genesis 6:12, 9:7). [5] The establishment of courts of justice (Genesis 9:6). [6] The prohibition of theft (Genesis 6:11). [7] The prohibition against eating flesh cut from a living animal (Genesis 9:4).

bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

According to the Christian interpretation of this account, Adam (and Eve), by eating from the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden, had disobeyed God, thereby committing the first sin by mankind and introducing death, the wages of sin, into the world. The Christian belief that the sin of Adam and Eve was transferred to all future descendants is reflected in teachings of the New Testament, such as:

Romans 5:12(KJV) – Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: [See also Romans 5:15a,19a.]

This means that mankind is condemned to death from the instant of conception.

How can people extricate themselves from this sentence of death? The answer is, according to Christianity, through the blood of Jesus. It is only by accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior that God's "grace" (remember, for Christians, Jesus is God manifest in the flesh) returns to mankind – a belief in Jesus "saves" a person and provides salvation:

Acts 15:11(KJV) - But we believe that through the grace of the LORD Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they. [See also Romans 5:15b,19b,21.]

According to Christianity, if Torah observance were effective for the purpose of the remission of sins, then the death of Jesus on the cross would have been for naught. However, the New Testament teaches that Jesus was the last a final sin sacrifice:

Hebrews 10:10,18(KJV) – (10) By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.
(18) Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. [See also Romans 6:10; Hebrews 9:12.]

Consequently, "the Law" (meaning, the Torah) is impotent, and righteousness can only be attained by following Jesus:

Galatians 2:21(KJV) - I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

✡ The Christian doctrine of "Original Sin" is anathematic to Judaism and contrary to the teachings of the Hebrew Bible. According to Judaism, mankind enters the world with "Original Purity", free of sin and with a pure soul – everyone starts with a "clean slate". Human beings are endowed with two impulses from birth, **the good inclination** (***YEtzer ha'TOV***) and **the evil inclination** (***YEtzer ha'RA***).[13]

[13] **The good inclination** (***YEtzer ha'TOV***) is the moral conscience, the inner voice that reminds one of God's Law when he or she considers doing something that is forbidden. **The evil inclination** (***YEtzer ha'RA***) is commonly perceived as the selfish nature, the desire to satisfy personal needs (food, shelter, sex, etc.) without regard for the moral consequences of fulfilling those desires. This is not necessarily a

According to the Hebrew Bible, it is only in a person's youth, when he or she has learned the rudiments of right and wrong and the basics of good and evil, that the evil inclination starts to "act up" and, at times, overpowers the good inclination:

> **Genesis 8:21 - And the Lord smelled the pleasant aroma, and the Lord said to Himself, "I will no longer curse the earth because of man, for the inclination of man's heart is evil from his youth, and I will no longer smite all living things as I have done.**

Human beings sin because they are not perfect. The ability to exercise their **free will** may also lead people to act in a way that transgresses the path delineated by God. At the consecration of the Temple he built, King Solomon says to God:

> **1 Kings 8:46 - If they (Israel) sin against You, for (there is) no man who does not sin, and You will be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, and their captors will carry them away captive to the land of the enemy, far or near.** [See also 2Chronicles 6:36.]

Recognizing that all people sin, Judaism specifies a process, which is rooted in the Hebrew Bible, for the atonement of sins and becoming righteous. According to the Hebrew Bible, sins are lifted and forgiven through –

Prayer,

> **2 Chronicles 7:13-14 – (13) If I shut up the heaven and there be no rain, and if I command locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence upon My people.**
> **(14) And My people, upon whom My name is called, humble themselves and pray and seek My presence and repent of their evil ways, I shall hear from heaven and forgive their sin and heal their land.** [See also Hosea 14:2-3.]

Contrite repentance,

> **Psalms 51:16-19[14-17 in Christian Bibles] – (16) Save me from blood, O God, the God of my salvation; let my tongue sing praises of Your charity. (17) O Lord, You shall open my lips, and my mouth will recite Your praise. (18) For You do not wish a sacrifice, or I should give it; You do not desire a burnt offering. (19) The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; O God, You will not despise a broken and crushed heart.** [See also Deuteronomy 4:27-31; 2Samuel 12:13.]

Good deeds,

> **Daniel 4:24[27 in Christian Bibles] - Indeed, O king, may my counsel please you, and with charity you will remove your sin and your iniquity by showing mercy to the poor; perhaps your tranquility will last."** [See also Hosea 6:6; Proverbs 10:2, 11:4, 16:6, 21:3.]

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bad thing since it was created by God. Without the desire to satisfy personal needs, man would not build a house, get married, have children, or conduct business affairs. Although **the evil inclination** is not a desire to do evil in the way we normally think of it in Western society - a desire to cause senseless harm, it can lead to wrongdoing when it is not controlled by **the good inclination**. There is nothing inherently wrong with hunger, but it can lead one to steal food. There is nothing inherently wrong with sexual desire, but it can lead one to commit rape, adultery, incest, etc.

Among these components of the atonement process, acts of kindness, i.e., acts of charity, are deemed as the most important, since Judaism is a religion based on deeds, with particular emphasis on charity.

Although one may petition to be forgiven for sins at any time, as devout Jews do in their daily prayers, the annual Holy Day of **Yom Kippur** (the Day of Atonement) is the time designated in the Hebrew Bible for atonement (Leviticus 16:29-34; Numbers 29:7-11). Yom Kippur is intended to be a vehicle that enables a person to contritely repent for his or her transgressions of the year that passed, and to resolve to do better in the coming year. It is important to recognize, however, that Yom Kippur atones only for sins between man and God, not for sins committed against another person. To atone for the latter, one must first seek reconciliation with the person who was wronged, righting the wrongs and the damaging effect of the sinful acts committed (this includes compensation where applicable). Since sinful acts against any of God's creations are, in effect, also sins against God, once reconciliation between people has been reached, the offender can commence the above-described process.

In sharp contrast to Christianity, Judaism embraces the path provided in the Hebrew Bible for achieving righteousness. It is up a person to make the choice.

NATURE OF SATAN

✞ Christianity's belief in Satan is rooted in the event that took place in the Garden of Eden, where the serpent, believed by Christians to be a manifestation of Satan, is the perpetrator of evil who succeeded in tempting man into disobeying God's command not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. According to the Christian perspective, which is based on a misinterpreted passage from the Hebrew Bible (Ezekiel 28:13-18), Satan was originally one of the angels in the Heavenly Host, but his rebellion against God caused him to fall from grace, ergo the common reference to him as a "fallen angel":

> **Revelation 12:9(KJV) - And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.**

Satan/"the Devil" has his own power and authority, which is used to oppose God and perpetrate evil – a view that reflects the influence of pagan religions, such as the religion of ancient Greece, which had the corresponding Hades-Zeus dyad, and the religion of ancient Rome, which had the Pluto-Jupiter dyad. This dualism of the forces of good and evil in a state of constant battle with each other that will prevail till the "end times", characterized these and other ancient pagan religions.

The author of the Book of Revelation, the last book in the New Testament, has a vision of the "end times", when Jesus will overpower Satan/"the Devil" and finally destroy him:

Revelation 20:10(KJV) - And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

As part of the discussion of the Christian view of Satan, it is worthwhile to comment on the name **Lucifer**, which, for many centuries, has been linked to Satan/"the Devil" in Christian writings.

The name Lucifer is absent from the New Testament. Origen, the late-second-early-third century C.E. Greek Church Father, is recognized as the first one to identify Satan with Lucifer.[14] Since that time, the name has found its way into Isaiah 14:12 in several "Old Testament" translations: Jerome's Latin Vulgate (BSV; 405), the King James Version (KJV; 1611), the Darby Translation (Darby; 1890), the New King James Version (NKJV; 1982), and the 21st Century King James Version (KJ21; 1994). The KJV renders the verse as follows:

Isaiah 14:12(KJV) - How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

The application of the name Lucifer in these Christian translation may have been motivated by the work of Origen, via the supposition that the entire passage, Isaiah 14:4-21, describes Satan, and from the belief that Isaiah 14:12 is explained in the New Testament via passages, such as:

Luke 10:18(KJV) - And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

However, this interpretation of the Isaiah passage turns out to be problematic for Christianity. The name **Lucifer** means **light-bringer** in Latin, and in Greek it is **phôsphoros** (**φωσφορος**). Both are also references to the planet **Venus**, which is known as the **morning star** or **star of the morning** [**αστηρ ο πρωινος** (***aster o prô'i'nos***)]. In the New Testament, both titles, the light-bringer and the morning star, are applied to Jesus:

2 Peter 1:19(KJV) - We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star [φωσφορος] arise in your hearts:

Revelation 22:16(KJV) - I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star [ο αστηρ ο λαμπρος ο πρωινος].

For this reason, with few exceptions, Christian theologians have generally rejected and abandoned this interpretation of the passage in Isaiah, as is evident from the meager number of translations that use the name Lucifer.[15]

[14] Jeffrey Burton Russell, _Satan: The Early Christian Tradition_, p. 131, Cornell University Press (1981).
[15] Regrettably, a highly respected translation by Rabbi A. J. Rosenberg also contains the name Lucifer, although for a different reason, as stated in the commentary on the verse: "***This is Venus, which gives light as the morning star.***" [_The Book of Isaiah, Volume One_, p. 125, The Judaica Press, Inc. (1992)]

✡ Judaism includes a belief in הַשָּׂטָן (***ha'saTAN***), **The Satan**, but not in "the Devil". This title derives from the root verb שׂטן (***stn***), which has several related meanings: **[to] denounce**, **[to] condemn**, **[to] be an adversary**, **[to] persecute**, **[to] hate**. The verb is used in the Hebrew Bible in this context as well (e.g., Zechariah 3:1; Psalms 38:21[20], 109:4). The noun שָׂטָן derives from that root verb, and it has several related meanings as well: **an accuser**, **an adversary**, **a foe**, **a hindrance**, **a prosecutor**. Of the 30 applications of this noun in the Hebrew Bible, it is used in this context on 11 occasions (Numbers 22:22,32; 1Samuel 29:4; 2Samuel 19:23; 1Kings 5:18, 11:14,23; Psalms 71:13, 109:6,20,29). The remaining 19 instances are all examples of its usage as a title/name. With one exception, all these instances utilize the explicit form of the title, inclusive of the definite article הַ (***ha***), and appear as הַשָּׂטָן, **The Satan**, also known as **The Adversary**. The single exception is at 1Chronicles 21:1, where it appears simply as שָׂטָן, **Satan**, where the context clearly indicates this is a reference to הַשָּׂטָן.

The following attributes of הַשָּׂטָן are evident from the Hebrew Bible:

- **הַשָּׂטָן is an angel, a bona fide member of the Heavenly Host.**

  This is evident from the following passage in the Hebrew Bible:

  > **Job 1:6 - Now the day came about, and the angels of God came to stand beside the Lord, and the Adversary [הַשָּׂטָן], too, came among them.**

- **As one of the angels of God, הַשָּׂטָן was created without a free will.**

  Though there is no direct reference to this in the Hebrew Bible, it can easily be deduced from the various accounts of angels and their missions, as well as an understanding of what "free will" really means.[16] In the simplest terms, "free will" means the ability to say "no". In all the narratives in the Hebrew Bible where angelic missions and actions are noted, there is not a single instance where an angel refused an assigned mission.[17]

- **As an angel, being a messenger of God, הַשָּׂטָן obediently carries out the mission assigned to him by God.**

  הַשָּׂטָן has the job of "testing" people's character in terms of their ability to control the evil inclination[18]. As such, he acts as "the prosecutor", accusing and presenting the collected evidence in support of the case against the "defendant".

  The Book of Job is where this battle between הַשָּׂטָן and the good inclination plays out, and where it is evident that (a) he is completely under the control of God, acting

[16] The idea that angels have no free will is first discussed in the Talmud and in the Midrash (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabbat, Folio 88b; Genesis Rabbah 48:11).

[17] The Talmud and Midrash speak of angels going on a single mission at a time (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Bava Metzi'a, Folio 86b; Genesis Rabbah 50:2). The Talmud and Midrash also note that angels possess an intellect and an inner life, and that they argue (but never refuse an assignment) and are capable of erring (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sanhedrin, Folio 38b; Midrash Psalms 18:13).

[18] הַשָּׂטָן is often identified as a manifestation of the evil inclination in extra-Biblical Jewish sources.

solely with divine permission to carry out torment, and (b) a person's virtue, a manifestation of the good inclination, can prevail.[19]

A religious belief in an entity that competes with God and has its own power and authority to oppose Him violates the basic tenets of monotheism. Judaism views הַשָּׂטָן as an angel who works for God, not against Him, and who must obtain permission from God for every action that he takes. הַשָּׂטָן actually facilitates human growth by providing the necessary challenge. Had God wanted mankind to just "be good" at all times, He would have created automata. Instead, humans were created with a free will, which gives them the ability to make choices:

> **Deuteronomy 30:15,19 – (15) Behold, I have set before you today life and good, and death and evil,**
> **(19) This day, I call upon the heaven and the earth as witnesses [that I have warned] you: I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse; and you shall choose life, so that you and your offspring will live;**

Of course, God wants us to "choose life" and to strive for the good. In stark contrast with the Christian idea of Satan/"the Devil", by challenging mankind, הַשָּׂטָן serves God in making human goodness a true choice and an opportunity to continuously excel.

CONCEPT OF "HELL"

✞ According to Christian beliefs, **Hell** is a terrestrial underground location ruled by Satan/"the Devil", and its inhabitants are subjected to punishment inflicted by an environment of fire and brimstone. The New Testament describes the nature of this place on numerous occasions, such as:

> **Matthew 8:12(KJV) - But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**
>
> **Matthew 25:41(KJV) - Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:**
>
> **Revelation 14:10-11(KJV) – (10) The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: (11) And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.**

According to the New Testament, for the souls condemned to live there, Hell is a place of darkness, fire, sulfur, and lakes of fire and brimstone, where weeping, gnashing of teeth, and torment are the constant state of affairs.

Opinions on the eternity of Hell vary among the Christian denominations. Many teach that Hell is eternal. Some believe that Hell is only temporary, and after

[19] The Talmud and Midrash describe angels to be subordinate to the righteous (Babylonian Talmud, Tractates Sanhedrin, Folio 93a & Nedarim, Folio 32a; Genesis Rabbah 21 & Deuteronomy Rabbah 1).

serving their time there, the souls are destroyed. Others believe that, after serving their time in Hell, souls are reconciled to God and admitted to heaven. The Roman Catholic Church views Hell not as a place but a state of separation from God, which results from dying in mortal sin without repenting and accepting His merciful love.

The population of Hell consists of the souls of those who were out of God's grace when they died, that is, people who died in sin and without repentance, including all "bad" Christians and all non-Christians, regardless of how they behaved during their lifetime, as well as Satan/"the Devil" and his angels (the demons). In the "end times", the souls and bodies of those condemned to Hell will be reunited and remain there to be tormented, but never consumed, by an eternal fire.

> **Revelation 21:8(KJV) - But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.**
> [See also Revelation 20:10 above.]

✡ Judaism's concept of "hell" is post-Biblical. The Hebrew Bible makes no direct reference to a place that fits the common Christian concept of Hell and has no specific word to name it.

The Talmud speaks of a place to which are consigned the souls of persons who did not lead exemplary lives on earth, the Hebrew word for which is גֵּיהִנּוֹם (***geihiNOM***). This term derives from the Biblical place known as both גֵּיא־הִנֹּם (***GEI-hiNOM***), **[the] Valley of Hinnom** (e.g. Nehemiah 11:30) and גֵּיא בֶן־הִנֹּם (***GEI VEN-hiNOM***), **[the] Valley of the Son of Hinnom** (e.g., Jeremiah 19:6). This is a valley located south of Jerusalem, where the fire-god Moloch was worshipped (via the sacrifice of children) by the Ammonites. During the times when the Temples stood in Jerusalem, the same place served as a garbage dump where the carcasses of the animals that were offered as sacrifices at the Temple were burnt.[20]

Views vary about the nature of גֵּיהִנּוֹם and what transpires there, whether it is a physical or spiritual place, and whether the dead or their souls inhabit it. The prevalent opinion within traditional Judaism is that all but the souls of the most righteous spend some time in גֵּיהִנּוֹם, a period that may last up to, but not exceed, 12 months. The place can be likened to a spiritual forge where the souls of decedents are cleansed of the stains from the sins for which the people did not repent prior to dying. Once all sins have been purged from it, the purified soul ascends to the "world to come". The only exceptions to this are the most righteous and the profoundly wicked. The souls of the most righteous are said to ascend directly to the "world to come". According to some, the souls of the

[20] The Greek New Testament uses the term **γεεννα** (***Ge'enna***) on 12 occasions for the place of eternal punishment by fire, and which is generally translated into the English as **hell** (e.g., Matthew 5:22).

profoundly wicked people are destroyed after 12-months in גֵּיהִנּוֹם, or they continue to exist, but remain in a constant state of remorse, according to others.

There are also different views on the actual process that takes place in גֵּיהִנּוֹם during the time that the souls spend there. Some describe it as place of severe punishment, somewhat reminiscent of the fire and brimstone treatment according to the Christian perspective. Others simply view it as a time when the decedents get an objective picture of their lives where they see the wrongs they have done, and experience remorse for these deeds. Some Jewish mystics hold that a demon is created for every sin a person commits during his/her lifetime, and after a person dies, he/she is punished by the very demons that he or she created.

III. SUMMARY

Some of the major differences between Judaism and Christianity were explored by comparing the respective views on several of the basic components they share. These comparisons bear out the fact that Christianity and Judaism are two fundamentally different theologies that happen to share a distant common origin. However, by rejecting the basic tenets of Judaism nearly 20 centuries ago, Christianity carved out its own "niche" among world religions.

The results of this comparative analysis demonstrate the absurdity of claims by Christian missionaries who engage in Jewish evangelism, such as Christianity being "fulfilled/completed Judaism". The following statement succinctly captures the essence of how different the two theologies are:

> **Scholars tell us that Christianity could be reduced to "faith in God," and Judaism to "wrestling with God." As Jews, we are obliged to question, struggle with and even, in extreme cases, take God to a holy court for the injustices of the world – where do you find this in Christianity?**[21]

Jews, while they must respect the fact that Christians, just as the followers of any other religion, have their own beliefs, also need to understand that Christian theology, regardless of denominational banners, is at odds with what the Hebrew Bible teaches and, therefore, is not suitable for Jewish people.

[21] Taken from a letter by Jim Brule to the "Readers Page" in *The Post-Standard*, a daily newspaper in Syracuse, NY (date and page information is not available).

"USE THE SOURCE, LUKE!"[1,2]

I. INTRODUCTION

The issue of whether Jesus, Christianity's Messiah, was properly anointed in order to qualify as Messiah was addressed, and resolved, in another essay.[3] It is, however, important to also deal with related claims, particularly when they invoke passages from the Hebrew Bible which allegedly support such claims.

A case-in-point is the passage Luke 4:16-21, which includes two verses, Luke 4:18-19, claimed to be quotes of Isaiah 61:1-2. In the original passage from the Book of Isaiah, the prophet declares that God has selected (anointed) him to prophesy about the future of Israel. The "parallel" passage in the Gospel of Luke has Jesus claiming to have fulfilled the role described by Isaiah, and Christian missionaries use this passage as evidence to support their claim that Jesus was duly anointed for his ministry as the Messiah.[4]

In this essay, the relevant texts from the New Testament and the Hebrew Bible are compared and analyzed to help determine the validity of this claim.

II. THE TEXTS AND THE CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON THEM

The following account describes the scenario from which the claim originates (the portion allegedly quoted from the Book of Isaiah is highlighted):

> **Luke 4:16-21(KJV) – (16) And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.**

---

[1] This is a pun on Obi-Wan Kenobi's line "Use the Force, Luke!" in the movie "Star Wars". "Use the Source, Luke!" is a common idiom from the field of computer software development and testing where it is used to suggest that one needs to read the source code that supports an application that is causing a problem. In this essay, the "Source" is a metaphorical reference to the Hebrew Bible.

[2] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:

- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "h"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

[3] *True Messiah - Properly Anointed; False Messiah - Smeared with Ointment* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Anointed.pdf

[4] For example, *Why Jesus/Yeshua Is the Messiah* - http://www.menorah.org/whyjim.html

(17) And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, (18) The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because HE HATH ANOINTED ME to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, (19) To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. (20) And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. (21) And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

The author describes how Jesus went to the synagogue in Nazareth on Shabbat, and there the “book” of Isaiah was handed to him. He opened the “book”, read a certain short passage from it, then closed it, returned the “book” to the person who gave it to him, and declared the Scripture to have been fulfilled in him.

Luke 4:16-21 is part of a larger passage that speaks of Jesus' ministry in the Galilee, which also includes an account of his rejection in Nazareth. Christian commentators generally view Isaiah 61:1-2 as having been spoken by the Messiah, though some attribute these words to the "divine pre-incarnated Messiah" speaking through his prophet Isaiah. In the text, this figure gives an account of his present commission, his ministry to bring gospel mercy – his so-called "first coming", and also points to his future commission, to bring judgment on non-believers and comfort to Zion – his so-called "second coming", where the time span between the two advents is called the "acceptable year".

III. ANALYSIS OF THE TEXTS

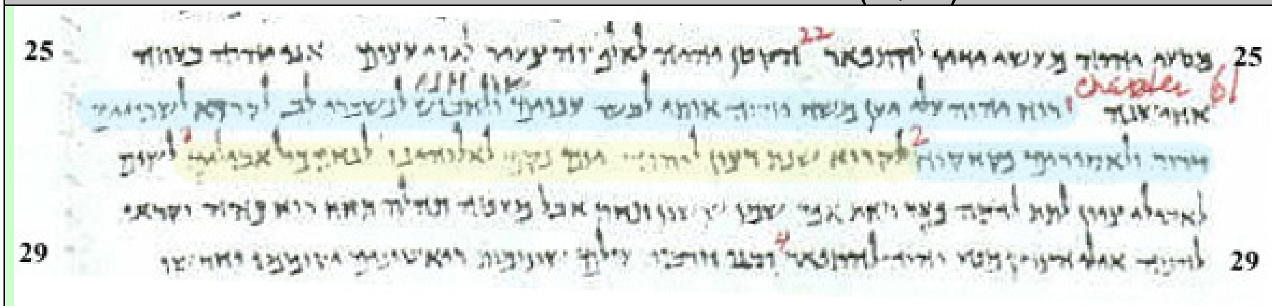
The fact that Luke 4:18-19 is a representation of Isaiah 61:1-2 is not at issue. What needs to be determined is how accurately this representation reflects the Hebrew text of Isaiah 61:1-2, as well as whether the context of Luke 4 is consistent with the context of Isaiah 61.

A. Comparing the texts

Table III.A-1 shows side-by-side English renditions of Luke 4:18-19 in the KJV New Testament, of Isaiah 61:1-2 in the KJV "Old Testament" and in the Hebrew Bible, and the corresponding passage from the Hebrew Bible (the Masoretic Text [MT]). The (hand-annotated) parallel passage from *The Great Isaiah Scroll* that was discovered in Cave 1 at Qumran is displayed at the top of the table.[5]

[5] Taken from Page 49 of *The Great Isaiah Scroll* website (http://www.ao.net/~fmoeller/qumdir.htm), where images of the complete *Isaiah A Scroll* from Qumran Cave 1 (1QIsa[a]) are displayed.

<u>Table III.A-1</u> – Comparing the texts

Hebrew Text from The Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa[a])						
						
King James Version Translation from the Greek		King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew		Hebrew Text	
Luke 4		Isaiah 61			ישעיה סא	
18	The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because HE HATH ANOINTED ME to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,	The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;	1	The spirit of the Lord God was upon me, since the Lord anointed me to bring tidings to the humble, He sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to declare freedom for the captives, and for the prisoners to free from captivity.	רוּחַ אדני יהוה עָלָי יַעַן מָשַׁח יהוה אֹתִי לְבַשֵּׂר עֲנָוִים שְׁלָחַנִי לַחֲבֹשׁ לְנִשְׁבְּרֵי־לֵב לִקְרֹא לִשְׁבוּיִם דְּרוֹר וְלַאֲסוּרִים פְּקַח־קוֹחַ׃	א
19	To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.	To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;	2	To declare a year of acceptance for the Lord and a day of vengeance for our God, to console all mourners.	לִקְרֹא שְׁנַת־רָצוֹן לַיהוה וְיוֹם נָקָם לֵאלֹהֵינוּ לְנַחֵם כָּל־אֲבֵלִים׃	ב

1. The Hebrew texts

A comparison of the Masoretic Text of Isaiah 61:1-2 with the text from the parallel passage in *<u>The Great Isaiah Scroll</u>* reveals only one difference, where the MT has the extra word אדני (***A-doNAI***), **the Lord**.[6] The Hebrew word and its renditions in the other texts are highlighted in Table III.A-1.

Dead Sea Scroll (DSS) scholars have found variant manuscripts among the discoveries, two of which were scrolls of the Book of Isaiah (Isaiah A and Isaiah B), both found in Cave 1. The *<u>Isaiah A Scroll</u>* (*1QIsa[a]*), dated by radio-carbon analysis to 335-327 B.C.E. and by paleographic analysis to 202-107

[6] It should be noted that in the Masoretic Text, the Tetragrammaton, יהוה, has vowel markings to have it pronounced as "*eloHIM*" in this verse, a title for the Creator normally translated as "God". The Targum Yonathan has the actual word אלהים (***E-loHIM***) in that place.

B.C.E.,[7] is an almost completely preserved scroll, while the ***Isaiah B Scroll*** (*1QIsa*[b]), dated to the Herodian period, 30 B.C.E.- 70 C.E.,[8] contains preserved portions of Chapters 10-66, but unlike the former, is an incomplete scroll with some chapters missing, leaving only fragmentary remains. Regarding the variations between the two Isaiah scrolls, a prominent DSS scholar writes:[9]

> **Looking at the two texts, we immediately recognize the coexistence of different versions. *Isaiah B* represents a proto-Masoretic text, with only minor variations from the traditional Hebrew text as we now know it. On the other hand, *Isaiah A* represents the sectarian type, for it uses Qumran linguistic forms and, therefore, was most probably copied by members of the group.**
>
> **In addition to these unique forms, this text also has many linguistic "modernizations" – forms and words common when it was copied (rather than when it was composed) – as well as simplifications. Some scholars have concluded, therefore, that the *Isaiah A Scroll* was intended for study and not for worship and that it represents a sort of common text, often termed "vulgar." The Book of Isaiah was so popular that eighteen fragmentary manuscripts of this book have been identified in the collection from cave 4.**

Consequently, it is not surprising that virtually all translations available today follow the MT in the opening verse, Isaiah 61:1, with the phrase "**the Lord God**" that includes the “extra” phrase "**the Lord**" for אדני. Exceptions to this pattern are two ancient Christian translations, the *LXX* and Jerome's *Latin Vulgate*, both of which follow the *Isaiah A Scroll* and have "**God**". The *Targum Yonathan*, which pre-dates the Masoretic era, has "**the Lord God**".[10]

2. Comparing the texts

The KJV and Jewish translations of Isaiah 61:1-2 are reasonably similar. On the other hand, the texts of Luke 4:18-19 and its alleged source, Isaiah 61:1-2, are considerably different and require further analysis. When these two passages are compared, it becomes evident that the author of the Gospel of Luke modified Isaiah's words as he placed them on the lips of Jesus. To help demonstrate the incongruence of these passages, their two component verses are compared below.

a. Luke 4:18 vs. Isaiah 61:1

The verse Luke 4:18 is divided into the six phrases that are separated by commas and each phrase is placed in a separate row in Table III.A.2-1. Within a given row, under each phrase from Luke 4:18 in the KJV New Testament (NT) are placed the corresponding phrases from the KJV "Old Testament" (OT) translation of Isaiah 61:1 and from the Jewish translation

[7] Geza Vermes, *An Introduction to the Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 24, Fortress Press (1999)
[8] Ibid, p. 29
[9] Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls*, pp. 173-174, ABRL Doubleday (1995).
[10] See, e.g., http://www.ucalgary.ca/~elsegal/TalmudMap/MG/MGYonatan.html

of Isaiah 61:1 in the Hebrew Bible (HB), respectively. NT Portions that require special attention are shown in darker highlight.

Table III.A.2-1 – Luke 4:18 vs. the KJV and Jewish translations of Isaiah 61:1

Row	Source*	Text		
1	NT	The Spirit of the Lord		is upon me,
	OT	The Spirit of the Lord	GOD	is upon me;
	HB	The spirit of the Lord	God	was upon me,
2	NT	because	he	hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor;
	OT	because	the LORD	hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek;
	HB	since	the Lord	anointed me to bring tidings to the humble,
3	NT	he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted,		
	OT	he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,		
	HB	He sent me to bind up the broken-hearted,		
4	NT	to preach deliverance to the captives,		
	OT	to proclaim liberty to the captives,		
	HB	to declare freedom for the captives,		
5	NT	and recovering of sight to the blind,		
	OT			
	HB			
6	NT	to set at liberty them that are bruised,		
	OT	and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;		
	HB	and for the prisoners to free from captivity.		

* NT=KJV New Testament; OT=KJV Old Testament; HB=Hebrew Bible

This information reveals the following significant discrepancies between Luke 4:18 and the corresponding Isaiah 61:1 translations (remember, according to the account in Luke 4:16-20, Jesus was reading from the "Book" of Isaiah):

- **In Row #1, the word GOD is missing in the NT and is present in the OT [the HB has God].**
- **In Row #1, both the NT and KJV cast the last phrase in the present tense, via the verb is, whereas the HB has it in the past tense, via the verb was.**
- **In Row #2, the NT has the word he where the OT has the LORD [the HB has the Lord].**
- **In Row #2, the NT has the phrase to preach the gospel to the poor where the OT has to preach good tidings unto the meek [the HB has to bring tidings to the humble].**
- **In Row #5, the NT has the phrase and recovering of sight to the blind, yet neither the OT nor the HB has a corresponding phrase.**
- **In Row #6, the NT tells of setting at liberty those who are bruised, while the OT tells of releasing from prison those who are bound, and the HB tells of releasing from captivity those who are prisoners.**

b. Luke 4:19 vs. Isaiah 61:2

The verse Luke 4:19 (NT) is shown in Table III.A.2-2, with the corresponding portions from the KJV "Old Testament" (OT) translation of Isaiah 61:2 and the Jewish translation of Isaiah 61:2 in the Hebrew Bible (HB) placed below it. The highlighted NT portion requires special attention.

Table III.A.2-2 – Comparing Luke 4:19 with KJV & Jewish renditions of Isaiah 61:2

Row	Source*	Text
1	NT	To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.
	OT	To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD,
	HB	To declare a year of acceptance for the Lord
2	NT	
	OT	and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;
	HB	and a day of vengeance for our God, to console all mourners.

* NT=New Testament; OT=Old Testament; HB=Hebrew Bible

This information reveals the following significant discrepancy between Luke 4:19 and the corresponding Isaiah 61:2 translations [remember, according to the context of Luke 4:16-20, Jesus was reading from Isaiah]:

- **In Row #1 both the NT and OT use a phraseology that implies the preaching of a specific year (using the definite article the) understood to be the year of Jubilee, whereas the phraseology in the HB (using the indefinite article a) implies the declaration of a year of redemption from exile.**
- **In Row #2, the NT has no corresponding text, i.e., the entire verse, Luke 4:19, corresponds to only the first portion of the verse Isaiah 61:2 in both the OT and the HB.**

Conclusion: Either Jesus changed the words of Isaiah as he read from the scroll, or the Gospel of Luke is of questionable credibility, or both.

Another passage from the same chapter in the Gospel of Luke gives even more reason to question its credibility.

Following the statements by Jesus about his ministry and the fulfillment of Scripture through his presence at this synagogue in Nazareth, he declares that the congregants were unworthy to see him perform miracles. According to the account, these statements enraged the crowd to such a degree that they wanted to kill him:

> **Luke 4:28-31(KJV) – (28) And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, (29) And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. (30) But he passing through the midst of them went his way, (31) And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days.**

The highlighted portion describes the geographical terrain near the city limits of Nazareth. There is, however, a problem with that particular description, since Nazareth is situated on a plain that is surrounded by the rolling hills of the Galilee. Though the Nazareth of today has expanded to the tops of the hills that surround it, in former times it was situated in the lower part, on the slope of a hill, and was surrounded by gentle rises. The entire region is noted for its plains and smoothly contoured land elevation, and there are no sharp peaks or steep cliffs nearby. Therefore, contrary to the description in Luke 4:29, there is neither any "**brow of the hill**" nor any steep cliff from which "**they might cast him down headlong**" in the immediate vicinity of the city Nazareth, particularly around the area of the city that is considered by Christian tradition to be the village of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus.

It is also worth noting that archaeological remains of a synagogue from the Second Temple period have not been found in the intensely explored area in and around Nazareth. On the other hand, archaeological remnants of such a synagogue were discovered in the village of *Gamla*, which is located on the top of a hill overlooking the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, which also has dangerous cliffs close by. This is the western edge of the region known today as the Golan Heights. *Could it be that the author of the Gospel of Luke changed the geographical description to suit the story in his narrative?*

B. Comparing context

As was noted earlier, Christians attribute the words in Isaiah 61:1-2, thus also Luke 4:18-19, to the Messiah, or the "pre-incarnated Messiah" (God, according to them) speaking through his prophet Isaiah, where he describes the mission of his ministry. This is inconsistent with the Jewish perspective on Isaiah 61:1-2.

There are, of course, no specific clues in Isaiah 61:1-2 to positively identify Jesus as the speaker. According to the immediate context in the Hebrew Bible, it is the prophet, not the promised Messiah, who is speaking in Isaiah 61:1-2. Isaiah speaks of himself and the nature of his mission, as an appointed messenger of God. The term מָשַׁח (***masHAH̲***), commonly translated as **[he] has anointed**, is to be understood in the context of **[he] has appointed** or **[he] has chosen**, since only kings and high priests of Israel, but not prophets, were anointed via the special process described in the Hebrew Bible.[11]

As was the case with all true prophets of Israel, who set the standard for the entire community as role models of holiness, scholarship, and closeness to God, the Divine Presence (שְׁכִינָה [***sh'chiNAH***]) came to rest upon Isaiah and endowed him with the gift of prophecy as he reached this level of spiritual and ethical achievement. Here Isaiah is a herald of joy, telling his people that God will yet free them from their captivity and exile. The spirit he is talking of is the spirit of

[11] The essay referenced in footnote 3 contains a detailed description of the process. The same language is used in 1Kings 19:16, where Elijah the Prophet is told to appoint his successor, Elisha the Prophet.

prophecy. Through this gift, Isaiah was able to convey to the people of Israel the divine message of promise that is developed throughout this and the following chapter, a vivid picture of Israel and Jerusalem in the messianic era.

By placing Isaiah's words in the mouth of Jesus, the author of the Gospel of Luke actually has Jesus admitting, contrary to mainline Christian beliefs, that he is, at best, only a prophet and not God. Moreover, the New Testament offers no evidence that Jesus fulfilled the actions described in Isaiah 61:1-2. *Did he free any captives or prisoners? Against whom did he come in vengeance?*

Sidebar Note: The custom of reading from the Prophets on Shabbat, Holy Days, and other special occasions on the Jewish calendar was established during the second century B.C.E., when the Syrian-Greek King Antiochus, whose forces occupied the Holy Land, prohibited the reading of the Torah at those times because of its "legal" nature. On the other hand, reading the Prophets and Writings was not banned since these were considered by the Syrian-Greeks as literature. As a way to get around this prohibition, which carried the death penalty, the Rabbis selected readings from the Prophets, each containing a minimum of 21 verses and with a theme that tied into the designated Torah portion for the particular occasion, and which were read instead – a custom that continued even after the successful revolt by the Maccabees, and is still in practice today. It is interesting to note that the tradition of reading from the Prophets is acknowledged in Luke 4:16-17, as well as in the Book of Acts (Acts 13:14-15,27).

Alas! Not only did the reading by Jesus of one and a half verses out of Isaiah 61 not meet the minimum requirement of a 21 verse passage, Isaiah 61:1-2 was never included in any of the designated readings from the Prophets on the various occasions.

Perhaps the crowd that heard Jesus read in the synagogue on that Sabbath realized what he was doing, which could have been one reason for their anger.

C. Christian missionary counter argument and the Jewish response

The textual differences between Luke 4:18-19 and Isaiah 61:1-2 cannot be denied and, therefore, the options available to Christian missionaries are rather limited, leaving one common argument vis-à-vis the irrefutable evidence.

- ✞ **Christian missionary argument:** Christians acknowledge and accept the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus. As God, they claim he had the right and the authority to paraphrase, in any way that suited him, Isaiah's inspired words.

- ✡ **The Jewish response:** The Hebrew Bible does not support the Christian belief that Jesus is a son that God fathered, who was "God in the flesh" on earth, and who, as part of the triune godhead, was divine.

  Moreover, to suggest that God can and will do as he pleases and even violate the rules and laws He gave to Israel, would be analogous to parents, as role models, teaching their children to "do as I say but not as I do". The Hebrew Bible is replete with examples in which Israel is asked to emulate and follow God's ways. *Are they to also follow the example where God violates his own*

rules? What sense would it then make to have faith, and what would be the point of having the Bible?

Finally, it is ludicrous to suggest that God had to appoint (anoint) Himself to carry out a mission. The Christian view of Psalms 22:1, according to which Jesus complains to God about having been forsaken by him, is another example of such incongruous logic.[12]

IV. SUMMARY

According to the New Testament and, thus, the Christian perspective, Jesus quotes Isaiah 61:1-2 in Luke 4:18-19, modulo some changes he made to the source, which he, being "God incarnate", was entitled to do, as he was reading from it. When he was done, he told the crowd that these Scriptures were fulfilled in him at that time.

Christian missionaries defend their doctrines by claiming that the advent of Jesus and of the New Testament are elements of a new revelation, one that the Jews who lived prior to the Christian era did not receive. *Can this be true? Were doctrines of such importance hidden from the Jewish people for some 1,300 years after the Revelation at Mount Sinai? Were all the Jews who lived before the time of Jesus deceived or tricked?*

As DSS research has demonstrated, the text of the Hebrew Bible did not change in any significant manner from the period of the Qumran texts to the time of preparation of the Masoretic Text that is in use today, a span of well over 1,000 years. A Jew who read Isaiah 61 before the birth of Jesus still read essentially the same text as a Jew who reads it today and, clearly, the message remains unchanged as well. No, there were no secret revelations planned and, according to the prophets, Israel received all that was to be revealed, and this cannot be stated in any clearer way than in the Hebrew Bible itself:

> **Amos 3:7 - For the Lord God does nothing unless He has revealed His secret to His servants, the prophets.**

Conclusion: Someone tampered with Isaiah's words (the "Source"). Either "Dr. Luke" saw it fit to "operate" on the text in order to create a better fit with other passages in the Gospel of Luke, or Jesus decided to change them in order to proclaim himself as the one appointed for the mission. You decide!

[12] See the essay, *Nailing An Alleged Crucifixion Scenario* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Psa22.pdf

MICAH 5:1[2][1] – BETHLEHEM: THE MESSIAH'S BIRTHPLACE?[2]

I. INTRODUCTION

In the opening verse of the second chapter in the Gospel of Matthew, its author declares that Bethlehem was the birthplace of Jesus:

> **Matthew 2:1(KJV) – Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, …**

The author then claims this event to have been the "fulfillment" of a prophecy in the Hebrew Bible, stating:

> **Matthew 2:5-6(KJV) – (5) And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, (6) And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.**

According to annotated Christian bibles, such as the New American Standard Bible [NASB][3], Matthew 2:6 points to Micah 5:2 in the Christian "Old Testament", which corresponds to Micah 5:1 in the Hebrew Scriptures. Hence, Micah 5:1[2] has become a significant "proof text" in the Christian missionary's portfolio.

A rigorous analysis of the Hebrew text in Micah 5:1 demonstrates that the attempted application of this verse in the New Testament, and its subsequent mistranslation in the Christian "Old Testament", are inconsistent with what the Hebrew Bible teaches.

II. COMPARISON OF TRANSLATIONS, AND THE APPLICATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Table II-1 shows side-by-side English renditions of the verse Micah 5:1[2], the verse Matthew 2:6 from the New Testament, as well as the corresponding verse from the

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[1] The notation Micah 5:1[2] shows the verse number from the Hebrew Bible first, followed by the corresponding verse number from the Christian "Old Testament" shown in brackets.

[2] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:

- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "h"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

[3] The NASB, among many other Christian bible versions, is available on the Bible Gateway - http://www.biblegateway.com/

Hebrew Bible, Micah 5:1. Matthew 2:6 is included since it contains the alleged quote from Micah 5:1[2].

Table II-1 – Comparing Matthew 2:6 with Micah 5:1[2]

King James Version New Testament	King James Version "Old Testament"	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text
Matthew 2:6	**Micah 5:2**	**Micah 5:1**	**מיכה ה,א**
And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art **not** the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.	But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.	And you, [of] Bethlehem [of] Efrat, who were to be insignificant among the thousands of Judah, from you [he] shall emerge for Me, to be a ruler over Israel; and his origin is from old, from ancient days.	וְאַתָּה בֵּית־לֶחֶם אֶפְרָתָה צָעִיר לִהְיוֹת בְּאַלְפֵי יְהוּדָה מִמְּךָ לִי יֵצֵא לִהְיוֹת מוֹשֵׁל בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וּמוֹצָאֹתָיו מִקֶּדֶם מִימֵי עוֹלָם׃

Aside from the fact that Matthew 2:6 is, at best, a paraphrase of the quoted portion of the source verse, of which the last phrase was completely left out, the rendition of Micah 5:2 in the KJV is problematic. These issues, which involve the highlighted phrases in the respective texts, are addressed in the analysis.

III. Analysis of the Passage

The Jewish translation of Micah 5:1 is separated into the following two segments in order to facilitate the analysis:

Segment A

Micah 5:1A – And you, [of] Bethlehem [of] Efrat, who were to be insignificant among the thousands of Judah, from you [he] shall emerge for Me, to be a ruler over Israel;

Segment B

Micah 5:1B – and his origin is from old, from ancient days.

A. Analysis of Segment A

The main object of analyzing this portion of the verse is to identify whom the prophet may be addressing here. The loss of various gender distinctions in the process of translating this passage from Hebrew into English makes it nearly impossible to obtain a correct identification when using an English translation without also studying the Hebrew text.

> **Micah 5:1A – And you, [of] Bethlehem [of] Efrat, who were to be insignificant among the thousands of Judah, from you [he] shall emerge for Me, to be a ruler over Israel;**

The opening phrase in the verse, וְאַתָּה בֵּית־לֶחֶם אֶפְרָתָה (***v^{e}ATAH BEIT-LEhem efRAtah***), starts with the word וְאַתָּה (***v^{e}ATAH***), which is a combination of וְ (***v^{e}***), the conjunction **and**, and אַתָּה (***ATAH***), the pronoun **you** for the 2nd-person,

singular, *masculine* gender, and which also is the noun in this case. Thus, וְאַתָּה (*v*[e]*aTAH*) translates as **and you**, in the 2nd-person, singular, *masculine* gender.

Following the word וְאַתָּה is the phrase בֵּית־לֶחֶם אֶפְרָתָה (***BEIT-LEhem efRAtah***). The term אֶפְרָתָה (***efRAtah***) is used in the Hebrew Bible in several ways:

- ✡ אֶפְרָתָה is the name of a place, אֶפְרָת (***efRAT***), to which the syllable ָה (***ah***) had been appended. The appendage of the syllable ָה to the name of a place in the Hebrew Bible most often is equivalent to adding the proposition "to" to the name, i.e., **to [name of the place]**; thus, אֶפְרָתָה would translate as **to Efrat** (e.g., at Genesis 35:16,19, 48:7; similar cases occur for other cities, such as Jerusalem [e.g., at 2Chronicles 32:9], Hebron [e.g., at 2Samuel 5:1], as well as other places that are not necessarily where people live, such as a well [e.g., at Genesis 24:16]).
- ✡ In some cases, the appended syllable ָה has the effect of adding the preposition "of/from" to the name, i.e., **of/from [name of the place]**. In this case, אֶפְרָתָה would translate as **of/from Efrat** (e.g., at 1Chronicles 2:24, where בְּכָלֵב אֶפְרָתָה (***b***[e]***chaLEV efRAtah***), translates as **in Calev of Efrat**). This application suggests the possibility that Efrat may have also been the name of a district or region, such as a metropolis or township, which included other places in addition to Efrat itself, as the following verse may indicate:

  Ruth 4:11 - And all the people who were in the gate and the elders replied, "[We are] witnesses! May the Lord make the woman who is entering your house like Rachel and like Leah, both of whom built up the House of Israel; and [may you] prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem.

- ✡ It is the name of a place, a city, also called אֶפְרָת, which is another name for the city of בֵּית־לֶחֶם, **Bethlehem**, as the common translations of the following verse may indicate:

  Genesis 48:7 - As for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died on me in the land of Canaan on the way, when there was still a stretch of land to go to Efrat, and I buried her there on the way to Efrat, which is Bethlehem. (See also Genesis 35:19.)

Sidebar Note: There could be an issue here with the manner in which the Hebrew in this verse, as well as in Genesis 35:19, is read and understood, which may impact the translation as well. One can quite easily understand this verse to read in the following manner:

Genesis 48:7 - As for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died on me in the land of Canaan on the way, when there was still a stretch of land to go to Efrat, and I buried her there on the way to Efrat, which is [in] Bethlehem.

The original verse unambiguously states that Jacob buried Rachel at some point, characterized in the verse as "there", which was still some distance from Efrat itself. Therefore, the last phrase could easily be understood as referring to the place where Jacob buried Rachel.

If this argument is valid, it could actually change the claim that these two names refer to the same place.

In the Hebrew language, which has no neuter gender (i.e., there is no Hebrew equivalent to the English pronoun **it**), cities and towns are assigned the feminine gender. This is also the case, *without exceptions*, for any city or town mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. It is important to recognize the distinction between a geographical patch of real-estate that bears the name of a city or town and its inhabitants, since there are instances in the Hebrew Bible where the population of a city or town is referred to by the name of that place, but in a masculine gender, which could appear to someone who may not be sufficiently proficient in the Hebrew language as if the city or town itself were referred to in the masculine gender [e.g., Isaiah 3:8, Ezekiel 25:9, 38:6, Amos 5:5, Micah 1:11]. The use of the pronoun אַתָּה, [singular, masculine] **you**, would not be an issue in this case since, in the Hebrew Bible, singular pronouns, such as אַתָּה, are applied in both the singular and plural context (e.g., Exodus 33:3).

The phrase בֵּית־לֶחֶם אֶפְרָתָה is an example of an *appositive*, an element of a sentence that further identifies the noun – אַתָּה in this case, which is the [singular, masculine] pronoun **you** – yet cities and towns are feminine objects. Therefore, this phrase *cannot* refer to a city or town.[4]

The next phrase, צָעִיר לִהְיוֹת בְּאַלְפֵי יְהוּדָה, (***tsa'IR lihYOT b^{e}alFEI y^{e}huDAH***), is an *adjective clause*, which is a clause that describes the noun. The first term in this phrase, צָעִיר (***tsa'IR***), is a masculine adjective (it can also serve as a noun), the feminine counterpart of which is צְעִירָה (***ts^{e}IRAH***). This adjective (noun) is used in the Hebrew Bible *exclusively* in reference to people, *never* in reference to places. Its most common application is in referring to **a young person** (e.g., Jeremiah 14:3, Job 32:6) and to the **younger of two persons** (e.g., Genesis 29:26). This term is also used in the Hebrew Bible as a metaphor to describe **persons who are of lower rank or stature**, **insignificant**, or **lowly** relative to others (e.g., 1Samuel 9:21, Psalms 119:141).

The word צָעִיר is followed by the expression בְּאַלְפֵי יְהוּדָה (***b^{e}alFEI y^{e}huDAH***). The Hebrew word אֶלֶף (***Elef***), **a thousand**, appears in this expression in a plural possessive construct, namely, אַלְפֵי (***alFEI***), **thousands of …**, combined with the preposition ־בְּ (***b^{e}-***), **among**, **in**, **within**, so that the expression translates as **among the thousands of ….** Recall how Moses divided the Israelites into groups of thousands, first according to their tribal affiliation and then by clans, over which he placed "**captains of thousands**" [שָׂרֵי אֲלָפִים (***saREI alaFIM***)], and further divided each thousand into subgroups of hundreds, over which he placed "**captains of hundreds**" [שָׂרֵי מֵאוֹת (***saREI mei'OT***)] (see Exodus 18:25). According to accounts in the Hebrew Bible, such divisions remained in place for the Kingdom of Israel through King Solomon's reign (see 2Chronicles 1:2), and

[4] If it were the town of Bethlehem being addressed in Micah 5:1, the opening term would have been וְאַתְּ (***v^{e}AT***), **and you**, in the 2nd-person, singular, feminine gender, such as at Jeremiah 3:1 and elsewhere.

for the Kingdom of Judah at least through King Amaziah's reign (see 2Chronicles 25:5). The Hebrew Bible contains 28 references to the "captains of thousands" and ten applications of the plural possessive construct אַלְפֵי that *could* be understood to relate to the groups of "thousands" among Israel, the latter of which are shown in Table III.A-1 along with their common Jewish translations and KJV translations [the phrases shown in the brackets are included to help with the context].

<u>Table III.A-1</u> – Applications of אַלְפֵי relative to the groups of "thousands" among Israel

Hebrew	Pronunciation	Reference	Common Jewish Translation	KJV Translation
אַלְפִּי	***al**PI*	Judges 6:15	my thousand [is the poorest in Menasseh]	my family [is poor in Manasseh]
אַלְפֵי	***al**FEI*	Numbers 1:16	[the heads of the] thousands of [Israel]	[heads of] thousands in [Israel]
		Numbers 10:4	[the leaders of Israel's] thousands	[heads of the] thousands of [Israel]
		Joshua 22:21	[the heads of the] thousands of [Israel]	[the heads of the] thousands of [Israel]
		Joshua 22:30	[the heads of the] thousands of [Israel]	[heads of the] thousands of [Israel]
		1Samuel 23:23	[among the] thousands of [Judah]	[throughout all the] thousands of [Judah]
בְּאַלְפֵי	***b**^{e}**al**FEI*	**Micah 5:1[2]***	**among the thousands of [Judah]**	**among the thousands of [Judah]**
לְאַלְפֵי	***l**^{e}**al**FEI*	Joshua 22:14	among the thousands of [Israel]	among the thousands of [Israel]
מֵאַלְפֵי	***m**^{e}**al**FEI*	Numbers 31:5	from the thousands of [Israel]	out of the thousands of [Israel]
וּלְאַלְפֵיכֶם	***u'l**^{e}**alfei**CHEM*	1Samuel 10:19	and by your thousands	and by your thousands

* - This case is included here conditionally for the benefit of the discussion that follows.

The analysis presented thus far is sufficient to develop several possible scenarios to describe whom Micah might be addressing in the opening verse.

1. Who is being addressed by Micah?

Scenario 1

One possibility is that Micah is addressing the inhabitants of the city בֵּית־לֶחֶם, **Bethlehem**. The added reference to **Efrat** could help identify the city as the one located in the territory of Judah so as to distinguish it from another Bethlehem located in the territory of Zebulun (see Joshua 19:15), though it is superfluous as seen from the rest of **Segment A**. The inhabitants of בֵּית־לֶחֶם may have comprised one of those groups of "thousands" in the Hebrew Bible, one that had a low status among the other "thousands" in the Tribe of Judah. Yet, in spite of its insignificance, Micah prophesies that out of this "thousand" מָשִׁיחַ (***mashi'ah***), the promised **Jewish Messiah**, will emerge.

A drawback of this scenario is that the population of בֵּית־לֶחֶם probably was large enough to comprise more than one such clan of a "thousand".

Scenario 2

A second possibility is that a certain clan from **Efrat**, i.e., a group of families that trace their lines of decent to a common ancestor, is being addressed here. In Hebrew, the name בֵּית־לֶחֶם (***BEIT-LEhem***) literally means **[the] House of Lehem** [לֶחֶם (***LEhem***) means **bread**, or (generic) **food**]. Thus, the title בֵּית־לֶחֶם may refer to a clan by that name who resides in **Efrat**. The members of this clan may have comprised one of the groups of "thousands" but, again, one that had a low status among the other "thousands" in the Tribe of Judah. Here, too, Micah prophesies that, in spite of its insignificance, מָשִׁיחַ will emerge out of this clan.

This scenario draws support from the fact that members of a clan or a family are referred to by the name of their clan or family, names that often derive from the names of their respective progenitors, as the following example demonstrates:

> **Numbers 3:19,27 – (19) And the sons of Kohath according to their families were Amram, Itzhar, Hebron, and Uziel.**
> **(27) And of Kohath, the Amramite family, and the Izharite family, and the Hebronite family, and the Uzzielite family; these are the Kohathite families.**

This may also be seen regarding the **Bethlehemite clan** [בֵּית־הַלַּחְמִי (***BEIT-ha'lahMI***)] in the following example:

> **1Samuel 16:1 - And the Lord said to Samuel, "Until when will you mourn for Saul, that I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go, I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite [בֵּית־הַלַּחְמִי], for I have found among his sons a king for Me.**

By slightly changing its common English translation, the following verse could demonstrate this even more explicitly:

> **1Samuel 17:12 - And David was the son of this Ephratite man [אֶפְרָתִי (*efraTI*)] from the House of Lehem [מִבֵּית־לֶחֶם (*mi'BEIT-LEhem*)] of Judah, whose name was Jesse, and he had eight sons; and the man, who was elderly in Saul's time, was among the [respected] men.**

A drawback of this scenario is that no person named לֶחֶם is mentioned anywhere in the Hebrew Bible. One would expect that, if there was a clan named בֵּית־לֶחֶם – one that was destined to become so significant in Israel – the name of its progenitor would have been mentioned somewhere in the Hebrew Bible.

Scenario 3

A third possibility is similar to the one described above in Scenario 2, except that here Micah addresses some unnamed group of people, perhaps a clan that hails from בֵּית־לֶחֶם and either comprised or was part of a "thousand", one that had a low status among the other "thousands" in the Tribe of Judah. Once again, as in the previous two scenarios, Micah prophesies that מָשִׁיחַ will emerge out of this clan even though it was lowly.

This scenario suffers from a drawback that is similar to that noted for Scenario 2. Namely, that a clan of a "thousand", or a group of people within it, destined for future greatness, is being addressed anonymously.

Scenario 4

Lastly, it is possible that being addressed here is a particular individual whose ancestors, and he himself, hail from בֵּית־לֶחֶם. This person was insignificant in his youth, but was the one whom God selected to be the king of Israel and the progenitor of the royal lineage out of which מָשִׁיחַ would eventually emerge.

In spite of the apparent anonymity, several accounts found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible fit into the characterization provided by Micah and help identify this special individual. This person turns out to be David, who was the one son that Jesse regarded the least when God dispatched Samuel to find and anoint the next king of Israel:

> **1Samuel 16:1,6-12 – (1) And the Lord said to Samuel, "Until when are you mourning for Saul, when I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and come, I shall send you to Jesse, the Bethlehemite, for I have seen for Myself a king among his sons."**
> **(6) And it was, that when they came, and he saw Eliab, that he said, "Surely, before the Lord is His anointed." (7) And the Lord said to Samuel, "Look not upon his appearance, or the height of his stature, for I have rejected him, for it is not as man sees, [that which is visible] to the eyes, while the Lord sees into the heart." (8) And Jesse called to Abinadab, and he presented him before Samuel, and he said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one." (9) And Jesse presented Shammah, and he said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one." (10) And Jesse presented seven of his sons before Samuel; and Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen these." (11) And Samuel said to Jesse, "Are these all the young men?" And he said, "The youngest still remains, and behold, he is tending the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him, for we shall not sit down until he comes here." (12) And he sent and brought him, and he was ruddy, with beautiful eyes, and handsome appearance. And the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he."**

Eventually, the aging King David was visited by the Prophet Nathan who conveyed to him God's promise of an everlasting dynasty, of which he was to be the progenitor, a dynasty that will eventually produce מָשִׁיחַ:

2Samuel 7:12-16 – (12) When your days are fulfilled, and you shall lie with your forefathers, then I will raise up your seed that shall issue from your body after you, and I will establish his kingdom. (13) He shall build a house for My Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. (14) I will be to him a father, and he shall be to Me a son; so that when he goes astray I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with afflictions of human beings. (15) And My mercy shall not depart from him; in the manner in which I withdrew it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. (16) And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you; your throne shall be established forever.

All four scenarios presented above are, in principle, plausible, though Scenario 4 provides the best "fit" with the written text. However, for the purpose of this essay, it is not necessary to further analyze these scenarios.

The analysis of **Segment A** has demonstrated, first and foremost, that the Prophet Micah is directing a prophetic message at a person (or a group of persons) who hailed from Bethlehem, not at a parcel of land that bears the name of the city, in which he foretells that the royal line that originated in Bethlehem will eventually produce מָשִׁיחַ. Nothing is said about מָשִׁיחַ being born in Bethlehem!

By contrast, the KJV translation uses Micah 5:2 to create a different prophetic scenario wherein the city of Bethlehem, in spite of being a small and insignificant place in the territory of Judah (for which no reason is given), will be the birthplace of the Christian Messiah. Most other Christian translations do the same thing.

B. Analysis of Segment B

Micah 5:1B – and his origin is from old, from ancient days.

The fact that **Segment A** of Micah 5:1 actually voids the positive identification (in the New Testament) of Bethlehem as the (Christian) Messiah's birthplace, created a serious problem for Christianity, one that is compounded by the Hebrew closing phrase of **Segment B**, מִימֵי עוֹלָם (***mi'y'MEI OLAM***), **from ancient days**.

Micah, a contemporary of the prophets Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah, and of King Hezekiah (around 730 B.C.E.), said something special here, namely, that the **origin** of מָשִׁיחַ would be from Bethlehem, from the long ago past, ***from ancient days***. However, this statement conflicts with Christian theology, since Jesus is considered as having existed from the beginning of time, from before Creation, and the phrase "**from ancient days**" does not satisfy this criterion. In order to "fix" this problem, many Christian translators simply replace the correct phrase, "ancient days", with phrases such as "days of eternity", "everlasting", or "days of time indefinite".

Who is telling the truth? The Hebrew phrase יְמֵי עוֹלָם (***y^{e}MEI OLAM***), **ancient days**, is used at Micah 5:1 with the preposition מִ (***mi-***), **from**, as מִימֵי עוֹלָם. All six instances of the expression יְמֵי עוֹלָם in the Hebrew Bible, including its

combinations with prepositions, are shown in Table III.B-1, along with their correct renditions and their renditions in the KJV.

Table III.B-1 – The expression יְמֵי עוֹלָם in the Hebrew Bible

Hebrew	Pronunciation	Reference	Correct Translation	KJV Rendition
יְמֵי עוֹלָם	*y^{e}MEI OLAM*	Isaiah 63:9,11	the days of old	the days of old
כִּימֵי עוֹלָם	*kiy'MEI OLAM*	Amos 9:11; Micah 7:14; Malachi 3:4	as in days of old	as in the days of old
מִימֵי עוֹלָם	*miy'MEI OLAM*	**Micah 5:1[2]**	**from ancient days**	**from everlasting**

The KJV correctly translates this expression in five out of the six cases as "days of old", which is synonymous with "ancient days", but at Micah 5:2 the KJV renders it as "from everlasting".

What could have motivated the KJV translators to change the translation at Micah 5:2, which speaks of the Messiah? A likely answer is that, by substituting "**from everlasting**" for "**from ancient days**", the KJV translators attempted to bring this "Old Testament" prophecy into "harmony" with the accounts in the New Testament and with Christian theology. *Could this be another example of "pious fraud" committed by some Christian authors?*

For the sake of completeness and fairness, it should be noted that, in contrast to the KJV (and several other Christian bibles), some Christian translations have the correct renditions of this phrase (e.g., New American Bible [NAB], New International Version [NIV], New Revised Standard Version [NRSV], and The New Jerusalem Bible, among others).

C. What's wrong with Matthew 2:6?

As was demonstrated above, the phrase "**from ancient days**" brings the reader back to King David and his ancestors, and this created a serious theological problem for Christianity. It was also shown how the KJV translators attempted to "solve" this problem in their rendition of Micah 5:2. The author of the Gospel of Matthew apparently recognized this problem as he was attempting to construct a cohesive message, and his creative way of dealing with the true context of Micah 5:1[2] was to simply restate his own version of this verse:

> **Matthew 2:6(KJV) – And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.**

Table III.C-1 shows a word-by-word (or, as appropriate, phrase-by-phrase) comparison of the four texts shown in Table II-1 at the beginning of this essay along with related comments on any discrepancies relative to the Hebrew text. [The notations **[M]** and **[F]** indicate the respective genders – masculine and feminine – in the Hebrew text. The notation **[N]** indicates a term that is gender-

neutral, such as the infinitive of a verb in lines 5 and 11, and the preposition inflected in the 1st-person singular in line 9, of the table.]

Table III.C-1 – Word-by-word comparison of the texts

#	Matthew 2:6 (KJV)	Micah 5:2 (KJV)	Micah 5:1 (Jewish)	מיכה ה,א
1	And thou	***But*** **thou (different; "But" replaces "And")**	And you [of]	**[M]** וְאַתָּה
2	Bethlehem	Bethlehem	Bethlehem	**[F]** בֵּית-לֶחֶם
3	***in the land of Juda*** **(different)**	Ephratah	[of] Efrat	**[F]** אֶפְרָתָה
4	***not the least*** **(different; note reversal of context)**	***little*** **(different; can apply to people and places)**	Insignificant [person(s)]	**[M]** צָעִיר
5	***art*** **(different; change of context)**	though thou be	who were to be	**[N]** לִהְיוֹת
6	among the princes of	among the thousands of	among the thousands of	**[M]** בְּאַלְפֵי
7	Juda	Judah	Judah	**[M]** יְהוּדָה
8	for out of thee	yet out of thee	from you	**[M]** מִמְּךָ
9	**(completely left out)**	unto me	for Me	**[N]** לִי
10	shall come	shall he come forth	[he] shall emerge	**[M]** יֵצֵא
11	**(completely left out)**	that is to be	to be	**[N]** לִהְיוֹת
12	***a Governor*** **(different; note the "G")**	ruler	a ruler	**[M]** מוֹשֵׁל
13	that shall rule my people Israel	in Israel	over Israel	**[M]** בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל
14	**(completely left out)**	whose goings forth have been	and his origin is	**[M]** וּמוֹצָאֹתָיו
15	**(completely left out)**	from of old	from old	**[M]** מִקֶּדֶם
16	**(completely left out)**	***from everlasting*** **(different; note change in timeline)**	from ancient days	**[M]** מִימֵי עוֹלָם

With the help of several "editorial" changes, as shown in the column for Matthew 2:6, **Segment A** was rather easily transformed into a passage that could show Bethlehem as being the Messiah's birthplace. This made it "line up" with the rest of the story that the author of the Gospel of Matthew wanted to convey.

Segment B, on the other hand, is disastrous to Christian theology, which called for "radical surgery" by the author of the Gospel of Matthew – he completely eliminated this problematic part of Micah 5:1[2] from Matthew 2:6. After all, had he included some modified version of **Segment B**, it may have drawn the reader to the person who lived some 200-300 years prior to Micah on the historical timeline, to King David, as the progenitor of the lineage from which the Messiah would emerge. That would have eliminated Jesus' divinity at the very least!

Once these changes were made, the resulting passage, Matthew 2:6, appeared to be, and is claimed as being, one of several hundred prophecies in the Christian "Old Testament" that has been fulfilled by Jesus per the accounts in the

New Testament. Yet, given the analysis presented above, how can any honest reader accept this sort of manipulation at face value?

IV. *NEWS FLASH!!!* ANOTHER BETHLEHEM

Archaeological evidence has recently been reported, in which another, more likely, birthplace of Jesus was identified.[5] Aviram Oshri, a senior archaeologist with the Israeli Antiquities Authority, has been excavating in the area of an Israeli village called ***Beit Lehem haGalilit***, **Bethlehem of the Galilee**, which is located a few miles west of Nazareth. This Bethlehem is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible as being in the territory of the Tribe of Zebulun, which included the lower Galilee (see Joshua 19:15). From his findings, Oshri concludes that Jesus was born in Bethlehem of the Galilee, not in Bethlehem of Judea.

The prospect of Jesus being born in the Galilee rather than in Judea creates serious problems for Christian theology in general, and for the claim of Jesus being from the "House of David" in particular, since Bethlehem of the Galilee was not part of Judea.

A more detailed analysis on the archaeological findings at Bethlehem of the Galilee and their possible implications to Christian beliefs appears in another essay.[6]

V. SUMMARY

Is Micah 5:1[2] a prophecy that מָשִׁיחַ *will be born in Bethlehem (of Judea)?* The Christian claim is that Jesus fulfilled this prophecy by being born in Bethlehem of Judea. As was demonstrated in the analysis presented herein, Bethlehem of Judea was the town from which King David's family originated, and this prophecy speaks of this city as the place where the messianic royal line originated, though not necessarily the birthplace of מָשִׁיחַ. This passage is all about King David's ancestry, with מָשִׁיחַ being but a future "by-product" of it. It is interesting to note, and somewhat surprising, that the translators of *The New Jerusalem Bible* (a Christian bible translated and used by the Roman Catholic Church) confirm this in a footnote to the verse Micah 5:2 (emphasis added by me):

> **Ephratha (to which Micah apparently attaches the etymological meaning of "fruitful", connecting it with the birth of the liberator) originally indicated a clan related to Caleb, 1 Ch 2:19,24,50, and settled in the district of Bethlehem, Rt 1:2; 1 S 17:12; the name later came to be used for the town itself, Gn 35:19; 48:7; Jos15:59; Rt 4:11, hence the gloss in the text. Micah is thinking of the ancient origin of the dynasty of David, Rt 4:11,17,18-22; 1 S 17:12. The evangelists later interpreted this passage as a prophecy of Christ's birthplace.**"[7]

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[5] Aviram Oshri, "*Where Was Jesus Born?*", *Archaeology*, Volume 58, No. 6, Nov/Dec 2005, pp. 42-45. [Abstract of article is available at - http://www.archaeology.org/0511/abstracts/jesus.html]
[6] *O Little Town of Bethlehem … (of Galilee)* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/galilee.pdf
[7] The New Jerusalem Bible, p. 1551, Doubleday (1985)

In other words, while this passage does not rule out Bethlehem of Judea from being the birthplace of the Messiah, as could be any other place, the notion that it **IS** his birthplace was introduced later, in the New Testament, as an interpretation by the Gospel writers.

Since the KJV translation of the Hebrew Bible came many centuries after the Gospel of Matthew was written, the only option available to the Christian translators for "harmonizing" Micah 5:1[2] with Christian theology and Matthew 2:6 was to suitably alter the context of the source verse. The discrepancies that exist between Matthew 2:6 and Micah 5:2 (in the Christian "Old Testament") are not likely to be noticed by most Christians since they generally study the New Testament first, which is where their theological ideas become well established. By the time they proceed to study the Christian "Old Testament" to "check out" these alleged prophecies of which the accounts of fulfillment have already been studied, those issues become rather transparent.

It is also worth noting that, relative to the few attributes of מָשִׁיחַ actually spelled out in the Hebrew Bible, which Jesus did not fulfill in any event, being born in Bethlehem of Judea, even if it were true, would be inconsequential.

Moreover, the rest of the fifth chapter of Micah proves that Jesus cannot be the subject of the prophecy in Micah 5:1[2]. Micah 5:2[3] speaks of the return of the Jewish people to Israel during the lifetime of the prophesied ruler. The historical record shows that such repatriation of Israel did not take place during the lifetime of Jesus. Then, Micah 5:4-5[5-6] gives an account of this ruler leading Israel in a successful war against its enemies. The historical record shows not only that Jesus never lead Israel in battle, he never ruled over Israel in the first place.

Finally, as the recently reported archaeological findings suggest, if Jesus was born in Bethlehem, he was born in Bethlehem of the Galilee, not in Bethlehem of Judea. So, even if this prophecy were to identify Bethlehem (of Judea) as the Messiah's place of birth, that prophecy would also not have been fulfilled by Jesus.

MATTHEW 2: IS IT FALSE OR IS IT TRUE?[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

The common theme of many claims made by Christian missionaries is that Jesus fulfilled hundreds of prophecies contained in the (Christian) "Old Testament", and various passages from the New Testament are cited as evidence of these alleged fulfillments.

In this essay, an entire chapter from the first book of the New Testament, Chapter 2 in the Gospel of Matthew, is analyzed in order to test the validity of such claims. It is demonstrated that, under scrutiny, the claimed prophetic fulfillments attributed to this chapter do not survive.

II. MATTHEW 2 IN THE KING JAMES VERSION

The King James Version (KJV) translation of Chapter 2 in the Gospel of Matthew is replicated below, including numbered footnotes, taken from the New American Standard Bible (NASB) and shown in this color highlighted text), that identify the verses being claimed as the messianic prophecies in the (Christian) "Old Testament" being fulfilled in this chapter. The statements of the alleged fulfillments are shown below in this color highlighted text, and their respective prophetic pronouncements, allegedly drawn from the (Christian) "Old Testament", are shown in this color highlighted text:

> **Matthew 2(KJV)**
>
> **(1) Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,**
> **(2) Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.**
> **(3) When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.**

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:

- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "h̲"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

(4) And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.
(5) And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,
(6) [1]And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.
(7) Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.
(8) And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.
(9) When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.
(10) When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.
(11) And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh.
(12) And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.
(13) And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.
(14) When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:
(15) And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, [2]Out of Egypt have I called [3]my son.
(16) Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.
(17) Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying,
(18) [4]In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.
(19) But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,
(20) Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.
(21) And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.
(22) But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:
(23) And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

[1] v. 6 - Micah 5:2[1 in the Hebrew Bible]
[2] v. 15 - Hosea 11:1; Numbers 24:8
[3] v. 15 – Exodus 4:22
[4] v. 18 - Jeremiah 31:15[14 in the Hebrew Bible]

III. Can Both Matthew 2 AND the Hebrew Bible Be True?

The second chapter in the Gospel of Matthew contains four accounts which, according to their author, were foretold in the Hebrew Bible and fulfilled by Jesus. As a test of their validity, the analysis below compares each of these four claimed

fulfillment accounts with its respective claimed prophetic statement in the Hebrew Bible.

A. <u>Claim #1</u>: Bethlehem is the Messiah's birthplace

According to the opening verse, Jesus was born in Bethlehem:

> **<u>Matthew 2:1-2(KJV)</u> – (1) Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, (2) Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.**

Upon hearing this proclamation, a very concerned King Herod summoned the chief priests and scribes to the royal court. He wanted to know where this child was born, and he was told the following:

> **<u>Matthew 2:5-6(KJV)</u> – (5) And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, (6) And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.**

In Matthew 2:6, the author appears to be quoting the verse Micah 5:2 from the (Christian) "Old Testament", which is Micah 5:1 in the Hebrew Bible.[2]

There are two major problems with Matthew 2:5-6 – its historical accuracy with respect to Christian theology, and its contextual accuracy with respect to the Hebrew Bible. First, according to the historical record, Herod reigned for some 33 years, from 37 B.C.E. to 4 B.C.E. This implies that, if the story in Matthew 2 were true, the events described thus far would have had to take place prior to the advent of the Common (Christian) Era. In other words, Jesus would have had to be born not later than 4 B.C.E. to fit into this scenario. Consequently, the chronology of the historical events conflicts with the time of birth of Jesus according to Christian theology.

Second, the claim that Jesus fulfilled the alleged prophecy that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem is based on a misapplication of this passage. Side-by-side English renditions of Matthew 2:6, Micah 5:2 from the KJV, Micah 5:1 from a Jewish translation, and the verse in Hebrew, are shown in Table II.A-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

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[2] A detailed analysis of this particular claim is presented in another essay, *Micah 5:1 – Bethlehem: The Messiah's Birthplace?* – http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Micah5_1.pdf

Table III.A-1 – **Comparing Matthew 2:6 with Micah 5:1[2]**

KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	KJV "Old Testament" Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text
Matthew 2:6	**Micah 5:2**	**Micah 5:1**	מיכה ה,א
[1]And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art **not** the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.	But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.	And you, [of] Bethlehem [of] Efrat, who were to be insignificant among the thousands of Judah, from you [he] shall emerge for Me, to be a ruler over Israel; and his origin is from old, from ancient days.	וְאַתָּה בֵּית־לֶחֶם אֶפְרָתָה צָעִיר לִהְיוֹת בְּאַלְפֵי יְהוּדָה מִמְּךָ לִי יֵצֵא לִהְיוֹת מוֹשֵׁל בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וּמוֹצָאֹתָיו מִקֶּדֶם מִימֵי עוֹלָם׃

[1] Micah 5:2[1 in the Hebrew Bible]]

The information presented in Table III.A-1 demonstrates that Matthew 2:6 not only "twists" the original text to make it fit the story line, it is an incomplete quote of the verse, where the author left out the most "damaging" portions.

Is the original verse, Micah 5:1, really a prophecy that מָשִׁיחַ *(**mashi'ah**), **the Messiah**, will be born in Bethlehem?* Christians and Jews agree that the passage is messianic; it is about King David's ancestry, which will also be the ancestry of מָשִׁיחַ – a direct descendant of King David. However, while Bethlehem is the place from which King David's family hailed and, thus, it is also the place of origin of the ancestors of מָשִׁיחַ, it is not necessarily his birthplace.

The author of the Gospel of Luke also claims that Jesus was born in Bethlehem:

> **Luke 2:4-7(KJV) – (4) And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) (5) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. (6) And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. (7) And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.**

The author of the Gospel of John records a difference of opinions among people:

> **John 7:40-43(KJV) – (40) Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. (41) Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? (42) Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? (43) So there was a division among the people because of him.**

The fact that he does not capitalize on the opportunity to demonstrate that Jesus fulfilled Micah's prophecy and state that Jesus was born in Bethlehem could indicate that the author of the Gospel of John did not necessarily concur with the authors of the other two Gospels. He lets stand the opposing assertion, that Jesus was of Galilean origin (see also John 1:46), and this is consistent with all

other references (except for those that relate to his birth) in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, that Jesus was from Nazareth. Curiously, the author of the Gospel of Mark, the earliest of the Four Gospels, is silent on this matter.

In contrast to the few significant attributes of מָשִׁיחַ specified in the Hebrew Bible, being born in Bethlehem, even if it were true, would be inconsequential.

<u>Conclusion</u>: Claim #1 becomes Pious Fraud Example #1.

<u>Sidebar Note</u>: Archaeological evidence has recently been reported, in which another, more likely, birthplace of Jesus is discovered.[3] Aviram Oshri, a senior archaeologist with the Israeli Antiquities Authority, has been excavating in the area of an Israeli village, known as ***BEIT LEhem haGliLIT***, **Bethlehem of the Galilee**, which is located some four miles west of Nazareth. This Bethlehem is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible as being in the territory of the Tribe of Zebulun, which included the lower Galilee (Joshua 19:15). From his findings, Oshri concludes that Jesus was most likely born in Bethlehem of the Galilee, not in Bethlehem of Judea.

The prospect of Jesus having been born in the Galilee rather than in Judea creates serious problems for Christian theology in general, and to the claim of Jesus being from the "House of David" in particular, since Bethlehem of the Galilee was not part of Judea.

A detailed analysis of the archaeological findings at Bethlehem of the Galilee and their possible implications to Christian beliefs appears in another essay.[4]

B. <u>Claim #2</u>: The return of Jesus from Egypt is foretold in the Hebrew Bible

Matthew 2:13-15 describes a dream Joseph had, in which an angel appeared to him and told him to flee with his family to Egypt and stay there until instructed to return. Upon waking, Joseph did as told, and stayed in Egypt until the death of Herod. In the last verse of the passage, the author claims that the return from Egypt by Joseph, Mary, and Jesus, is the fulfillment of an "Old Testament" prophecy:

> **<u>Matthew 2:15(KJV)</u> - And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.**

Side-by-side English renditions of Matthew 2:15, Hosea 11:1 from the KJV and from a Jewish translation, and the verse in Hebrew, are shown in Table III.B-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

[3] Aviram Oshri, *<u>Where Was Jesus Born?</u>*, Archaeology, Volume 58, No. 6, Nov/Dec 2005, pp. 42-45. [The abstract of this article is available at - http://www.archaeology.org/0511/abstracts/jesus.html]

[4] *O Little Town of Bethlehem … (of Galilee)* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/BethlehemOfGalilee.pdf

Table III.B-1 – Comparing Matthew 2:15 with Hosea 11:1

KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	KJV "Old Testament" Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text
Matthew 2:15	**Hosea 11:1**	**Hosea 11:1**	הושע יא,א
And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, [2]Out of Egypt have I called [3]my son.	When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.	For, when Israel was young, I loved him, and from Egypt I called my son.	כִּי נַעַר יִשְׂרָאֵל וָאֹהֲבֵהוּ וּמִמִּצְרַיִם קָרָאתִי לִבְנִי׃

[2] Hosea 11:1
[3] Exodus 4:22

The phrase "**Out of Egypt have I called my son**" in Matthew 2:15 points to Hosea 11:1 in order to convey the notion that the flight of baby Jesus to Egypt, to escape Herod's homicidal intentions, was not an arbitrary event. Rather, it was the fulfillment of what Hosea had foretold.

To test the validity of the claim, consider the passage Hosea 11:1-2 (shown in both a Jewish translation and the KJV translation):

> **Hosea 11:1-2 – (1) For, when Israel was young, I loved him, and from Egypt I called my son. (2) [Yet, as much as] they [the prophets] called to them [Israel], so did they turn away from them; they sacrificed to the Ba'als [לַבְּעָלִים (*la'b^{e}aLIM*)] and burnt incense to the idols.**

> **Hosea 11:1-2(KJV) – (1) When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. (2) As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.**

It is clear from both renditions that Hosea 11:1 does not describe a child/Messiah fleeing to Egypt and then being summoned back. The prophet relates how God called the fledgling nation of Israel out of Egypt. In the very next verse, Hosea 11:2, the prophet tells how, in spite of pleas by the prophets, those called out of Egypt sinned against God – they worshipped the בְּעָלִים (*b^{e}aLIM*), **Ba'als**, and other idols.[5]

The author of the Gospel of Matthew would have created a serious dilemma had he quoted both verses in their entirety. Hosea 11:1, in context, shows it is not a prophecy, but a restatement of an event in the history of Israel. Hosea 11:2 is a continuation of the recounting of events in the history of Israel. Attributing Hosea 11:1 to Jesus is tantamount to making sinner out of him and his parents, sinners who were guilty of idolatry – one of the three capital sins in Jewish law. The author avoided this situation by simply lifting out of this historical passage just the phrase that suited his purpose, "**Out of Egypt have I called my son**".

[5] The term בְּעָלִים is the plural of the noun בַּעַל (*BA'al*), the head god of the Canaanites.

Did this trick solve the problem? Not really since, by going back to the source, Chapter 11 in the Book of Hosea, one would realize that this son is Israel – the fledgling Jewish nation, and not Jesus.

Some Christian bibles reference the last phrase in Matthew 2:15, "my son", to Exodus 4:22 (shown in both a Jewish translation and the KJV translation):

Exodus 4:22 – And you [Moses] shall say to Pharaoh, 'So said the Lord, "My firstborn son is Israel."'

Exodus 4:22(KJV) – And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn:

This rather curious attempt to "point" to Jesus actually shows explicitly that the "son" is Israel. In fact, God declares that Israel is His firstborn son. *What does this do to the credibility of all those New Testament accounts that proclaim Jesus is the only begotten son of "the Father"?*[6]

Conclusion: Claim #2 becomes Pious Fraud Example #2.

C. Claim #3: King Herod's killing of the children is foretold in the Hebrew Bible

King Herod, apparently angered at being mocked by the wise men and desiring to neutralize the threat posed to his throne by this newborn child of whom they spoke, kills all of Bethlehem's children of age two years and younger:

> **Matthew 2:16-18(KJV) – (16) Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men. (17) Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, (18) In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.**

Of particular interest here is the last verse, Matthew 2:18, which is, according to the author, the alleged fulfillment of a prophesied sadness that would follow the massacre of the children by King Herod.

Side-by-side English renditions of Matthew 2:18, Jeremiah 31:15 from the KJV, Jeremiah 31:14 from a Jewish translation, and the verse in Hebrew, are shown in Table III.C-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

[6] See, for example, John 1:18, 3:16,18, Hebrews 11:17, 1John 4:9,

Table III.C-1 – **Comparing Matthew 2:18 with Jeremiah 31:14[15]**

KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	KJV "Old Testament" Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text
Matthew 2:18	**Jeremiah 31:15**	**Jeremiah 31:14**	ירמיה לא,יד
[4]In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.	Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.	So said the Lord: "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation, bitter weeping, Rachel is weeping for her children; she has refused to be comforted upon her children, for they are gone."	כֹּה ׀ אָמַר יהוה קוֹל בְּרָמָה נִשְׁמָע נְהִי בְּכִי תַמְרוּרִים רָחֵל מְבַכָּה עַל־בָּנֶיהָ מֵאֲנָה לְהִנָּחֵם עַל־בָּנֶיהָ כִּי אֵינֶנּוּ׃

[4] Jeremiah 31:15[14 in the Hebrew Bible]

This verse from the Book of Jeremiah is part of a passage, Jeremiah 31:2-20 [1-19 in some Bibles], that is chanted in every Jewish synagogue as part of the prayer services on the second day of ***Rosh haShanah***, the **Jewish New Year**. Perhaps the primary reason this passage found its way into this Jewish liturgy is that its last three verses speak of the efficacy of repentance. Another reason is that the passage contains a prophecy of the national restoration of Israel, which brings to the Jewish people a heartening message of hope to encourage them in their darkest ages. The verse in Jeremiah 31, which immediately follows the one being referenced in Matthew 2:18 as the original prophecy, continues this positive message with which God addresses the grieving Rachel:

> **<u>Jeremiah 31:15[16 in Christian Bibles]</u> – So said the Lord, "Refrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears; for there is reward for your work," the word of the Lord, "and they shall return from the land of the enemy."**

This verse points forward in time to a delightful picture of the joy of a redeemed Israel. Probably more Jewish liturgy and music has been drawn from this chapter in Jeremiah than from any other single chapter in the Hebrew Bible!

The allusion to Rachel's weeping over the disappearance of her children, a metaphoric reference to Israel in exile, has no connection or relevance to the killing of the children by King Herod, as the author suggests in Matthew 2:17-18.

<u>Conclusion</u>: Claim #3 becomes Pious Fraud Example #3.

D. <u>Claim #4</u>: The Prophets Foretold of Jesus Being from Nazareth

While Joseph and his family are in Egypt, an angel appears to him in a dream, informs him that Herod died, and that he, Joseph, is to bring his family back to the Land of Israel. However, since Herod's son, Archelaus, was the ruler in Judea at that time, Joseph decides to go north to the Galilee to settle in the town of Nazareth. The author of the Gospel of Matthew claims this, too, as a fulfillment of a prophecy by the Jewish prophets:

Matthew 2:23(KJV) - And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

A search of the Hebrew Bible for passages containing the substance of what was allegedly "**spoken by the prophets**" will not yield any results – no such verses exist in the Hebrew Bible. Nowhere in the Hebrew Bible is there any reference to the Messiah as a *Nazarene*, nor is the town of *Nazareth* ever named therein. This prompts the question: *What might have been the author's agenda here?*

Various speculative ideas have been proposed as possible answers to this question. One suggestion is that the author was referring to the description of the Messiah being a נֵצֶר (***NEtser***), **an offshoot**, as used in Isaiah 11:1, a metaphorical allusion to a new flourishing scion from King David's lineage. The problem with this idea is that the proper name נֵצֶר is never mentioned in the Hebrew Bible as a possible name of מָשִׁיחַ. Moreover, the author wrote "**which was spoken by the prophets**", i.e., referring to a plurality, not to a single prophet, who may have made such a prophetic statement. Since the term נֵצֶר has its only messianic application, via a metaphor, at Isaiah 11:1, the author's attempt to generalize its significance by claiming multiple applications is unsuccessful.

Another proposal is the notion that the author used a "play on words" with the Hebrew root verb נצר (***NUN-TSAdi-RESH***), **[to] guard**, **[to] watch [over]**. This idea, too, has no support in the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew name for **Nazareth** is נַצְרַת (***natsRAT***) [also נָצֶרֶת (***naTSEret***)], which may have a possible connection with the root verb נצר, primarily due to the geographical location of the town, being situated on an elevated plateau. However, one who hails from Nazareth is called נוֹצְרִי (***notsRI***), a term that has become the Hebrew word for **a Christian**. The common noun derived from the root verb נצר is נוֹצֵר (***noTSER***), **a guard**, **a watchman**, and no such term is ever used in the Hebrew Bible in connection with מָשִׁיחַ.

Yet another idea is that the author is referring to Jesus as **a Nazirite**, an English term that comes from the Hebrew noun נָזִיר (***naZIR***), **one who is consecrated through a vow** (e.g., Numbers 6:2, Judges 13:5). However, nowhere in the Hebrew Bible is it stated, alluded to, or implied that מָשִׁיחַ will ever take the vow of a נָזִיר.[7] Moreover, there is no linguistic connection between the Hebrew word נָזִיר, a Nazirite, which derives from the root verb נזר (***NUN-ZAyin-RESH***), and the Hebrew word נוֹצְרִי, a Nazarene, which derives from the root verb נצר.

[7] ***Nazirite vows*** were taken by both men and women for personal reasons, such as giving thanks for a recovery from an illness, or for the birth of a child. The Nazirite vow includes three elements: (1) the hair to remain unshorn during the period of the vow; (2) abstinence from intoxicants; (3) avoidance of contact with a dead body. The minimum period for such a vow was 30 days, but it can extend over several years, and can even be a lifelong dedication. Since the Bible does not encourage such a lifestyle, a נָזִיר had to bring a sin offering after the vow ended, in order to atone for the sin committed against his own person.

The strongest evidence for the author's intended message may be found in the verse Matthew 2:23, since it provides the reason for Jesus being called **a Nazarene** [in Greek Ναζωραιος (***Nazoraios***), **from/of Nazareth**]. Jesus is called a Nazarene because he resided in the town of Nazareth [in Greek Ναζαρεθ (***Nazareth***)], which has no relevance to any of the above-noted Hebrew words. Therefore, all those speculations about what the author of the Gospel of Matthew had in mind here, in terms of references to Hebrew words, are non sequiturs.

Consequently, and regardless of the author's intentions, the outcome remains the same, Matthew 2:23 points to a nonexistent prophecy in the Hebrew Bible.

<u>Conclusion</u>: Claim #4 becomes Pious Fraud Example #4.

IV. SUMMARY

This study of Chapter 2 in the Gospel of Matthew identified and analyzed four claims of allegedly "fulfillments" of prophecies from the (Christian) "Old Testament". The analysis demonstrated that these claims were false – the four accounts were designed to retrofit Jesus into the Hebrew Bible by making it appear as if he had fulfilled these alleged prophecies by the Jewish prophets.

The first chapter in the Gospel of Matthew contains claims that were analyzed in several other essays, where those claims by its author were also shown to be false relative to the Hebrew Bible.[8,9,10,11]

Though not the earliest of the four Gospels by chronology, the Gospel of Matthew is the first book in the New Testament and, as such, it sets the tone for the rest of that portion of the Christian Bible.

Given the lack of credibility of the first two chapters in the New Testament, how can one accept the rest of the book as valid, let alone as Scripture?

[8] *Isaiah 7:14 - Part 1: An Accurate Grammatical Analysis* – http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Isa714_1.pdf
[9] *Isaiah 7:14 - Part 2: Refutation of Christian Apologetics* – http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Isa714_2.pdf
[10] *Genealogical Scams and Flimflams* – http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Genealogies.pdf
[11] *The Right to the Throne or to the "Tomb of the Unknown"* – http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Throne.pdf

EXPOSING THE "YESHU'A" NAME GAME[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

Up to the early fourth century CE, the encounter between Judaism and Christianity was mostly a battle of words. However, in the fourth century CE, when the Roman Emperor Constantine became a Christian and made mainline Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire, the conflict took on a new dimension. Christians now possessed both the official recognition and the power over the leadership of the Roman Empire, and the first casualty of this triumph by the Church was its tolerance of others. From that time on, the history of Christianity has given birth to a vicious pattern of persecution of non-Christians, and especially of the Jewish people, by Bible-toting Christians. These violent acts have caused many millions of Jews to be murdered, maimed, displaced, and stripped of both dignity and possessions simply because they were Jews. Those harsh experiences have left a bitter taste about Christians and Christianity among the Jewish people, as noted in the following quotes by two significant persons:[2]

> **"Nazi anti-Judaism was the work of godless, anti-Christian criminals. But it would not have been possible without the almost two thousand years' pre-history of 'Christian' anti-Judaism..."** Hans Küng, *On Being A Christian*, Doubleday, Garden City NY, (1976), Page 169.

> **"The Jews are a nervous people. Nineteen centuries of Christian love have taken a toll."** Benjamin Disraeli

Although Christianity has been a tremendous success among all other groups, its efforts among the Jewish people have failed miserably. As one of the smallest components of the world's population, the Jews have continued to remain Jewish in spite of the nearly 2000-year persistent campaign by “the Church” to convert them to Christianity.

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:
- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as “h”
  - The letter כ is transliterated as “ch”
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as “k”
  - The letter ק is transliterated as “q”
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted “e” following the consonant
  - There is no “doubling” of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

[2] Source: *An Overview of 2000 Years of Jewish Persecution* - http://www.religioustolerance.org/jud_pers.htm

Early in the second half of the 20th century, evangelical Christians began to realize that "something was wrong with the picture". They observed that, even as the third millennium was approaching, the rate of success in converting Jews to Christianity was diminishingly small. It would require a rather large number of Jews to accept Jesus in order to bring about his anticipated "return", i.e., his "Second Coming", since, according to the New Testament, Jesus implored a group of Jews as follows:

> **Matthew 23:39 (KJV) - For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.** [See also Luke 13:35.]

According to evangelical Christians, passages such as these imply that Jesus will not return until Jews accept him en masse. Since this has not yet occurred, the Jewish people are apparently "holding up the show", which has become the incentive and motivation to intensify the effort to convert Jews to Christianity.

Evangelical Christians hold that only their religious beliefs are fully valid, since their doctrines are based on the "inerrant Word of God". Theirs is the only path that will lead people to salvation and to a living knowledge of and intimate relationship with God. In other words, they claim to have an exclusive ownership of "The Truth", and that all other religions of the world, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and liberal Christianity, lead individuals away from salvation and on a path to "hell".

This "package" proved to be rather “hard sell” to the Jewish people, given the long history of relentless Christian persecution of Jews – a significant hurdle to leap and overcome in the quest for Jewish souls. To help “solve” this problem, the strategy had to undergo a paradigm shift – since murdering Jews was not effective bringing them to Christianity, perhaps "loving" them would be received much more favorably.

How was this new approach put into action? One tactic was to distance oneself from the atrocities of the past by charging that all those who engaged in the persecution of Jews were not "true Christians", since "true Christians" really love the Jewish people and have only their best interest in mind (to save them from going to "hell"). But this alone would not suffice to bring the Jews to Christianity; the sales pitch had to be "sugarcoated" in order to make it more palatable. The package was tailored to what a Jew might be more apt to accept – the proper language was developed for communicating with Jewish people; a language that consisted of more familiar, “Jewish friendly” elements that would draw them in, rather than the common "Christian lingo”, which conjures up visions of the past "show of horrors" and pushes them away.

Enter Pastor Martin Rosen, allegedly a Jew by birth who converted to Christianity in the 1950's and was an ordained Baptist minister.[3] After being officially affiliated with the *American Board of Missions to the Jews* (the precursor to *Chosen People Ministries*[4]), he founded *Jews for Jesus*[5] in 1973, an organization dedicated to

[3] Rosen attended Northeastern Bible Institute, an Evangelical Christian seminary in New England.
[4] http://www.chosenpeople.com/
[5] http://jewsforjesus.org/

Jewish evangelism. Rosen, who used the name *Moishe Rosen*, appears to have had key role in developing this "Jewish friendly" language, several examples of which are displayed in Table I-1.[6]

Table I-1 – Examples of the new "Jewish friendly" language

The Christian term	The corresponding "Jewish friendly" term
Jesus Christ	Messiah Yeshua[7] or Yeshua haMashiach
Convert(s)	Messianic Jew(s) or Completed Jew(s) or Fulfilled Jew(s)
Christian(s)	Bible believer(s)
Church	A meeting place for Bible believers or a synagogue
New Testament	New Covenant / Brit Chadashah
The Cross	A Tree

This essay focuses on what has become the most popular and widely used term in this new vocabulary, יֵשׁוּעַ (***yeSHU'a***), allegedly the given Hebrew name of **Jesus**..

II. WHAT'S IN A NAME?

What is so special about the name יֵשׁוּעַ? Pose the following questions to Hebrew-Christians who use this name for Jesus (e.g., people affiliated with groups such as Jews for Jesus, Messianic Judaism, and others):

? How do you know that יֵשׁוּעַ was the name by which Jesus was known when he lived?

Their responses to this question are likely to fall into two categories:

1. **One group of answers will have as its common theme the claim that יֵשׁוּעַ, in Hebrew, means salvation, which is how Jesus rewards those who accept him as their lord and savior.**
2. **The other group of answers will have as its common theme the notion that *ιησους* (*iēsous*) is the Greek version of the Hebrew name יְהוֹשֻׁעַ (*YehoSHU'a*), the diminutive of which is claimed to be יֵשׁוּעַ, a form that was allegedly a popular name during the time around the change to the Common Era.**

Then, follow up with the question:

? What evidence can you offer in support of your claim?

Responses to this question, in general, will also fall into two categories:

1. **One group of answers will identify the Greek New Testament, or some archaeological artifacts of questionable authenticity, as their evidence.**

[6] This is based, in part, on a facsimile of a "Communications Card" used in training Christian missionaries to convert Jews, which appears on p. 1 in Rabbi Tovia Singer's 1998 Study Guide for his "Let's Get Biblical" tape series.
[7] This is one popular spelling of the name. Since the original is a Hebrew name, other ways to spell the transliteration are possible and are used by various groups of Hebrew-Christians.

2. **The other group of answers will typically be of the type, "*This is what I was told by X*" (where X could stand for *a friend*, *another 'believer'*, or *a Pastor* [*messianic "rabbi"*], etc.).**

The analysis that follows utilizes factual linguistic data taken from the Hebrew Bible, and which are relevant to the name יֵשׁוּעַ, in order to test the validity of the claims made in the responses to these questions.

A. Hebrew Etymology

Table II.A-1 contains the Hebrew linguistic information for the study of the term יֵשׁוּעַ. Starting with the Hebrew root verb, all the derived vocabulary found in the Hebrew Bible is identified, including verbs, nouns, and proper names. The King James Version (KJV) renditions of proper names are provided for reference.

Table II.A-1 – Hebrew etymology

Hebrew Root Verb				
ישע (*YOD-SHIN-Ayin*)	**Contextual meanings:** to free [from captivity/slavery], to help, to redeem, to rescue/save [from danger]			
Derivative Verb Forms Found in the Hebrew Bible				
Hebrew	**#**	**Pronunciation**	**Stem [*binYAN*]**	**Meaning**
הוֹשִׁיעַ	184	***hoSHI'a***	***hif'il*** (active)	[he] freed, helped, redeemed, rescued, saved
נוֹשַׁע	21	***noSHA***	***nif'al*** (passive)	[he] was freed, helped, redeemed, rescued, saved
Derivative Nouns Found in the Hebrew Bible				
Hebrew	**#**	**Pronunciation**	**Gender**	**Meaning**
יֵשַׁע\יֶשַׁע	36	***YEsha***	Masculine	deliverance, help, salvation
מוֹשִׁיעַ	20	***moSHI'a***	Masculine	deliverer, redeemer, savior
מוֹשָׁעָה	1	***mosha'AH***	Feminine	deliverance, help, rescue, salvation
יְשׁוּעָה	75	***y^e^shu'AH***	Feminine	deliverance, help, rescue, salvation; also, blessing, happiness
יְשׁוּעָתָה	3	***y^e^shu'aTAH***	Feminine	deliverance, help, rescue, salvation (this is an ancient poetic form of ***y^e^shu'AH***)
תְּשׁוּעָה	34	***t^e^shu'AH***	Feminine	deliverance, redemption, rescue, salvation
Derivative Proper Names Found in the Hebrew Bible (all masculine)				
Hebrew	**#**	**Pronunciation**	**KJV Renditions**	**Identification (Remarks)**
אֲבִישׁוּעַ	5	***aviSHU'a***	Abishua	(1) Son of Phineas son of El'azar son of Aaron (2) Son of Bela son of Benjamin
אֱלִישׁוּעַ	2	***eliSHU'a***	Elishua	One of David's sons (also known as Elishama)
אֱלִישָׁע	58	***eliSHA***	Elisha	Son of Shaphat, the Prophet
הוֹשֵׁעַ	16	***hoSHE'a***	Hoshea, Hosea, Oshea	(1) Son of Nun, Moses' servant and leader of Israel into Canaan; (2) Son of Azazyahu; (3) Son of Beeri, the Prophet; (4) Son of Elah, last King of Israel; (5) A signatory of covenant (Nehemiah 10)
הוֹשַׁעְיָה	3	***hosha'YAH***	Hoshaiah	(1) Father of Yezaniah & Azariah officers of Judah; (2) Head of the officers of Judah (Nehemiah's time)

יְהוֹשֻׁעַ	218	***y***^{e}***hoSHU'a̲***	Jehoshua, Joshua	(1) Son of Nun, Moses' servant and leader of Israel into Canaan; (2) Landowner from Beit-Shemesh (David's time); (3) Governor of Jerusalem (Josiah's time); (4) Son of Jehozadak, the High Priest (Zerubbabel's time)
יֵשׁוּעַ	28/1	***yeSHU'a̲***	Jeshua	(1) Son of Nun, Moses' servant and leader of Israel into Canaan; (2) Son of Jehozadak, the High Priest (Zerubbabel's time); (3) A Priest (Hezekiah's time); (4) Various other individuals; (5) A town in Judea
יִשְׁעִי	5	***yish'i̲***	Ishi	(1) Two men from Tribe of Judah; (2) A man from Tribe of Simeon; (3) A man from Tribe of Manasseh
יְשַׁעְיָה	4	***y***^{e}***sha***^{ae}***'YAH***	Jesaiah, Jeshaiah	(1) Son of Elam; (2) Son of Merari of the House of Levi; (3) A man from the Tribe of Benjamin; (4) A grandson of Zerubbabel
יְשַׁעְיָהוּ	35	***y***^{e}***sha***^{ae}***'YAhu***	Isaiah, Jeshaiah	(1) Son of Amotz, the Prophet; (2) A Levite musician (David's time); (3) A descendant of Eliezer, the son of Moses)
מַלְכִּי־שׁוּעַ	5	***malKI-SHU'a̲***	Malchishua, Melchishua	One of King Saul's sons

The three names, הוֹשֵׁעַ (***HoSHE'a̲***), יְהוֹשֻׁעַ (***Y***^{e}***hoSHU'a̲***), and יֵשׁוּעַ (***YeSHU'a̲***), are of particular interest to this study, and are subjected to further analysis below.

B. A Closer Look at Three Relevant Proper Names

Table II.B-1 displays the three names included in this study, הוֹשֵׁעַ, יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, and יֵשׁוּעַ, and all their occurrences in the Hebrew Bible. The Christian "Septuagint" (LXX) renditions are presented in transliterations of the Greek.

Table II.B-1 – LXX & KJV renditions of the names הוֹשֵׁעַ, יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, and יֵשׁוּעַ

Name	#	Identification	LXX Rendition	KJV Rendition	Reference
הוֹשֵׁעַ	3	Joshua Son of Nun's earlier name	**ausē**	Oshea	Numbers 13:8,16
			iēsous	Hoshea	Deuteronomy 32:44
	3	A Prophet of Israel	**ōsēe**	Hosea	Hosea 1:1,2
	8	Last King of Israel	**ōsēe**	Hoshea	2Kings 15:30, 17:1,3,4,6, 18:1,9,10
	1	A signatory of the covenant	**ōsēe**	Hoshea	Nehemiah 10:24[23 in Christian Bibles]; Ezra 20:24 in the LXX
	1	An officer from the Tribe of Ephraim in King David's days	**ōsēe**	Hoshea	1Chronicles 27:20
יְהוֹשֻׁעַ	204	Son of Nun, Moses' servant and leader of Israel into Canaan	iēsous	Jehoshua	Numbers 13:16
			iēsoue	Jehoshuah	1Chronicles 7:27
			iēsous	Joshua	Elsewhere
	2	Landowner from Beit-Shemesh	**ōsēe**	Joshua	1Samuel 6:14,18

	1	Governor of Jerusalem	iēsous	Joshua	2Kings 23:8
	11	Son of Jehozadak, High Priest	iēsous	Joshua	Haggai 1:1,12,14, 2:2,4, Zechariah 3:1,3,6,8,9, 6:11
יֵשׁוּעַ	1	Son of Nun, Moses' servant and leader of Israel into Canaan	iēsous	Jeshua	Nehemiah 8:17
	1	A priest in the days of Hezekiah	iēsous	Jeshua	2Chronicles 31:15
	6	Son of Jehozadak, High Priest	iēsous	Jeshua	Ezra 3:2,8, 4:3, 5:2, 10:18, Nehemiah 12:1
	20	Various individuals (including the High Priest)	iēsous	Jeshua	Ezra 2:2,6,36,40, 3:9, 8:33, Nehemiah 3:19, 7:7,11,39,43, 8:7, 9:4,5, 12:7,8,10,24,26, 1Chronicles 24:11
	1	A town in Judea	iēsous	Jeshua	Nehemiah 11:26

The information shown in Table II.B-1 indicates that:

- With two exceptions, the LXX does not distinguish among the three names. All three Hebrew names, regardless of who owned them, are translated into Greek as **ιησους**. The two exceptions, where the LXX shows a different name, come in pairs. One pair is found at Numbers 13:8,16 where, at verse 16, Joshua's name is changed from הוֹשֵׁעַ to יְהוֹשֻׁעַ:

  <u>Numbers 13:8,16</u> – (8) From the tribe of Ephraim, *<u>HOSHE'a</u>* (*αυση [ausē]* in the LXX) the son of Nun.
  (16) These are the names of the men which Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called *<u>HOSHE'a</u>* (*αυση [ausē]* in the LXX) the son of Nun, *<u>YehoSHU'a</u>*.

  The other pair is found at 1Samuel 6:14,18:

  <u>1Samuel 6:14,18</u> – (14) And the cart came to the field of *<u>YehoSHU'a</u>* (*ωσηε [ōsēe]* in the LXX), a Bethshemite, and stood there, where there was a great stone; and they split the wood of the cart, and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the Lord.
  (18) And the golden mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both of fortified cities, and of country villages, to the great stone of Abel, where they set down the Ark of the Lord; this stone remains to this day in the field of *<u>YehoSHU'a</u>* (*ωσηε [ōsēe]* in the LXX), the Bethshemite.

  <u>Sidebar note</u>: Though LXX is a Church-rendered document, Christian missionaries claim that the LXX is a Jewish work, a claim which has already been proven to be false.[8] The "Original Septuagint" was the translation by 72 Jewish scholars and Rabbis of the Torah (Pentateuch) into Koiné Greek, the spoken dialect in the mid-third century B.CE *Could it be that the 72 leading Jewish scholars and Rabbis of the time would not know the difference between the names* הוֹשֵׁעַ*,* יְהוֹשֻׁעַ*, and* יֵשׁוּעַ*, and translate them all as into the same name in Greek?* Of course not!

- The KJV, unlike the LXX, distinguishes among the three names. In fact, on two occasions the KJV goes beyond the three names and draws further

[8] See Section II.B in *Exposing A Missionary Deception [Concerning the Meaning of* עַלְמָה *(almah)]* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/j4jexposed.pdf

distinction. First, regarding the name הוֹשֵׁעַ, as it applies to Joshua, at Numbers 13:8,16 the KJV has:

> **<u>Numbers 13:8,16(KJV)</u> – (8) Of the tribe of Ephraim, *Oshea* the son of Nun. (16) These are the names of the men which Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called *Oshea* the son of Nun Jehoshua.**

Second, regarding the name יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, at Numbers 13:16 the KJV has:

> **<u>Numbers 13:16(KJV)</u> – These are the names of the men which Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Oshea the son of Nun *Jehoshua*.**

And at 1 Chronicles 7:27 the KJV has:

> **<u>1Chronicles 7:27(KJV)</u> - Non his son, *Jehoshuah* his son.**

The same name has two slightly different spellings, both resembling the Hebrew name.

- Within the Jewish canon of the Hebrew Bible, the name יֵשׁוּעַ is present only in the last Books: Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles.
- With the one exception shown below and found in the genealogy of 1Chronicles 7, the name יְהוֹשֻׁעַ is present only in the Torah and Prophets sections in the Jewish canon of the Hebrew Bible:

> **<u>1 Chronicles 7:27</u> - Non his son, *YehoSHU'<u>a</u>* his son.**

Some of these observations are revisited in the analysis that follows.

III. Claims to Justify the Name "Yeshu'a": Does the Evidence Support the Claims?

The data provided in Section II is used next to test the validity of the Christian missionary claim, as well as the evidence offered to support it, that יֵשׁוּעַ is the Hebrew name of Jesus.

As was noted above, two common types of responses are offered by Hebrew-Christians in response to the question about the name יֵשׁוּעַ being applied to Jesus. One answer is that יֵשׁוּעַ means “salvation” in Hebrew, since salvation is his gift to those who become "believers". *Is this true?*

Table II.A-1 shows the etymology of the Hebrew root verb ישׁע, from which the Hebrew noun יְשׁוּעָה, **salvation**, and the Hebrew proper name יֵשׁוּעַ are derived. One obvious problem with this Christian missionary claim is that these two terms are spelled differently and have different vowels. A second problem is that the two words have different meanings and applications. A third problem is that the two Hebrew terms are of different genders: יְשׁוּעָה is a feminine noun, and יֵשׁוּעַ is a

masculine proper name, and their respective pronunciations are different. In the Hebrew language, terms applied as proper names generally follow gender.

<u>Conclusion #1</u>: *y^e^shu'AH* (יְשׁוּעָה), not *yeSHU'a* (יֵשׁוּעַ) means "salvation".

The other answer to the question about the name יֵשׁוּעַ is the claim that **ιησους** is the Greek version of the Hebrew name יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, the diminutive form of which is claimed to be יֵשׁוּעַ, a form that is also claimed to have been a popular name of that general era. *Is this true?*

Table II.B-1 shows the three Hebrew proper names that are relevant to the claims being tested, since they are all connected with the person Joshua Son of Nun, whose Hebrew name is יְהוֹשֻׁעַ. The other two names are הוֹשֵׁעַ, the name of Joshua Son of Nun before he was renamed by Moses, and יֵשׁוּעַ, the name used on one occasion for Joshua Son of Nun by Nehemiah. As was already noted earlier, the LXX, in effect, makes no distinction between these three names. Relative to Joshua Son of Nun, the only place where the LXX differentiates in its renderings of הוֹשֵׁעַ (in Greek, **αυση**) and יְהוֹשֻׁעַ (in Greek, **ιησους**) is at Numbers 13:8,16. In this case, there had to be some distinction made, at least in the latter of the two verses where the name change is described, in order to avoid nonsensical context. There is also the other situation in the LXX (1Samuel 6:14,18) where, for some unknown reason, the name יְהוֹשֻׁעַ was rendered differently from all other instances as **ωσηε**, which is the way the Hebrew name הוֹשֵׁעַ is rendered throughout the LXX.

<u>Conclusion #2</u>: The LXX does not distinguish between the three proper names הוֹשֵׁעַ, יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, and יֵשׁוּעַ, when applied to Joshua (the son of Nun).

Is there any basis to the claim that the name יֵשׁוּעַ is a diminutive form of יְהוֹשֻׁעַ? This is actually the case in modern times. However, note that, while the name יְהוֹשֻׁעַ appears, with one exception (1Chronicles 7:27), only throughout the first two portions of the Hebrew Bible – in the Torah and Prophets – the name יֵשׁוּעַ appears <u>only</u> in the third portion of the Hebrew Bible, in the Writings. In fact, יֵשׁוּעַ appears only in the last Books of the Hebrew Bible: Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles. If this were truly a diminutive form, would not one expect to see some interchangeable usage of the two names? The fact that the use of these two names is segregated in separate portions of the Hebrew Bible would indicate that they are not necessarily related in this manner.

<u>Sidebar note</u>: According to Jewish tradition, just as with אַבְרָם (***AvRAM***), **Abram**, the expansion of his name into אַבְרָהָם (***AvraHAM***), **Abraham**, was an expression of divine approval, so did this diminution of יְהוֹשֻׁעַ into יֵשׁוּעַ express divine disapproval for failing to implore God to remove the passion for idolatry from the heart of the people. Joshua failed to do this because of his assumption that God possessed the land in its pristine holiness, so that this by itself would help Israel to overcome its idolatrous tendencies.

<u>Conclusion #3</u>: Even though יֵשׁוּעַ is a diminutive form of יְהוֹשֻׁעַ these days, the evidence in the Hebrew Bible does not support the case for biblical times.

Is it possible that יֵשׁוּעַ was a popular name given to male children in the general era in which Jesus lived? In order to validate this claim, it is necessary to search extant sources from that time for names that were used. The only extant authentic sources from that general period of time are the Mishnah (recorded circa 200 CE), the Jerusalem Talmud (recorded circa 200-400 CE), and the Babylonian Talmud (recorded circa 200-500 CE).

An exhaustive search of these massive works yielded <u>only two instances</u> of the name יֵשׁוּעַ and scores of distinct instances of the other two names, הוֹשֵׁעַ and יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, among the hundreds of names that appear in these works, excepting citations of Biblical references to them. One name, יוֹחָנָן בֶּן יֵשׁוּעַ (***Yo<u>h</u>aNAN BEN YeSHU'<u>a</u>***), appears once in the Mishnah (Order ***TahaROT***, Tractate ***YaDAyim***, Chapter 3:6). The other name, יֵשׁוּעַ בַּר גָּזוֹרָה (***YeSHU'<u>a</u> BAR GaZOrah***), appears once in the Gemara of the Jerusalem Talmud (Tractate ***Ta'<u>a</u>NIT***, Folio 18a).[9]

These results indicate that, among the hundreds of persons named in those works, the names הוֹשֵׁעַ and יְהוֹשֻׁעַ were common, while the name יֵשׁוּעַ was rare.

<u>Conclusion #4</u>: The available evidence does not support the claim that יֵשׁוּעַ was a popular name being used in the days of Jesus.

In one of the two types of responses concerning the evidence offered in support of the claim that יֵשׁוּעַ was the Hebrew name of Jesus, the New Testament is often cited as evidence. This response is puzzling, considering the fact that the New Testament was originally written in the Greek language. The name יֵשׁוּעַ appears neither in the Greek New Testament nor in its commonly used popular English translations.

Moreover, since the LXX does not distinguish between the three proper names, it is impossible to determine which of these names is represented by the Greek name **ιησους**.

<u>Conclusion #5</u>: Based on the evidence in the LXX and in the common English translations of the New Testament, it is impossible to conclude, with any degree of certainty, that יֵשׁוּעַ was the given Hebrew name of Jesus.

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[9] The Mishnah (***mishNAH***) is an early written compilation of Jewish oral tradition; it is the basis of the Talmud. The Gemara (***ge maRA***) contains the Talmudic Sages' commentaries and discourses on the Mishnah. Together, the Mishnah and Gemara are the Talmud (Mishnah ~15% and Gemara ~85% of it).

As it concerns a reply of the form, "*this is what I was told by X*", as evidence, the analysis presented above should demonstrate to anyone who is able to think for himself or herself that the facts do not support what someone has told this person.

<u>Conclusion #6</u>: Do not accept at face value everything that people may tell you. Verify and validate against the facts all information you are asked to accept. Remember, relatives, friends, "believers", clergy, etc., are all mortal human beings.

IV. THE "BOTTOM LINE"

It is only in recent history, since the second half of the 20th century, that the substitute name יֵשׁוּעַ for Jesus has surfaced as part of the Hebrew-Christian missionaries' jargon.

The book <u>*PRACTICAL LESSONS FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF ISRAEL FOR THE CHURCH OF TO-DAY*</u>, by F. C. Gilbert, A Converted Hebrew, ©1902 Library of Congress, South Lancaster Printing Company, Lancaster, Massachusetts, a 400-page opus, does not contain a single reference to any of the names, הוֹשֵׁעַ, יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, or יֵשׁוּעַ. This is significant since the author cites Christian scholars such as Alfred Edersheim, among others.[10]

Although there are cases where some Jewish Sages referred to Jesus as יֵשׁוּעַ in their works, Christian sources did not use that proper name for Jesus prior to the 20th century. The usage of the name "*Yeshua*" by Hebrew-Christians in their communications commenced in the latter half of the 20th century. It appears in print in various publications, such as in the recent translation into English of the New Testament, <u>*JEWISH NEW TESTAMENT*</u>, by David H. Stern (a Jew who converted to Christianity), and in other media, such as radio and television. Today, as part of a vigorous and well-funded campaign to evangelize the Jewish people, this deceptive material has become ubiquitous. Communicated in a "Jewish friendly" style, its purpose is to help snare Jewish souls in this Christian missionary trap.

<u>Conclusion #7</u>: The substitute name application of יֵשׁוּעַ for Jesus was revived by evangelical Christian missionaries in the latter half of the 20th century as part of a new tactic in their quest for Jewish souls.

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[10] Alfred Edesheim was an Austrian Jew born in 1825, who converted to Christianity at the age of 20, and became a minister and prominent Christian scholar and author. He used the names ***Jehoshua*** and ***Jeshua*** in reference to Jesus once in all his works, in a single paragraph in Book **II**, Chapter 4 of his work <u>*The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah*</u>. It is rather odd that, in view of claims about their common use prior to the mid-20th century CE paradigm change, the names appear but once, and even here only in the context of "Jewish tradition", in all of Edersheim's many works.

V. SUMMARY

This essay examined the Hebrew proper name יֵשׁוּעַ, and tested the validity of its use by the various groups of Hebrew-Christians as the proper Hebrew name of Jesus.

The etymology of the root verb ישׁע identified three relevant Biblical proper names, הוֹשֵׁעַ, יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, and יֵשׁוּעַ, which were analyzed, and comparisons were made of their translations into Greek (via the LXX) and English (via the KJV). The Mishnah, Jerusalem Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud were also searched for applications of these three proper names.

The rigorous analysis of the data clearly demonstrated that there is no valid and credible evidentiary basis, either Biblical or historical, to justify the association of the Hebrew proper name יֵשׁוּעַ with the name Jesus.

JEREMIAH 31:30-36[31-37][1] WILL THE REAL "NEW COVENANT" PLEASE STAND UP![2]

I. INTRODUCTION

The passage Jeremiah 31:30-36[31-37] is unique in that it contains the only instance of the phrase בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה (***brit hadaSHAH***), **a new covenant**, in the Hebrew Bible. Both Christians and Jews view this passage as messianic, albeit for different reasons.

Christian missionaries claim that this unique phase foretells the advent of the Christian "New Covenant" that would replace what they call the "Old Covenant", a reference to Judaism's Torah. Consequently, this passage is an important so-called "proof text" in the portfolio of the Christian missionary.

A detailed analysis of the Hebrew text of this passage, within its proper context, demonstrates how this messianic passage lacks any relevance or connection to the New Testament and to Jesus, Christianity's Messiah. Rather, it contains several important prophecies that will be fulfilled in the messianic era.

II. CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH TRANSLATIONS OF JEREMIAH 31:30-36[31-37]

Table II-1 displays side-by-side English renditions and the Hebrew text of the Jeremiah 31:30-36[31-37]. The King James Version (KJV) translation is shown with pointers to cross-referenced passages in the New Testament. [These referential notations are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB). The corresponding passages quoted below the table are from the KJV.]

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[1] The passage Jeremiah 31:30-36 appears Christian Bibles as Jeremiah 31:31-37; hence the notation Jeremiah 31:30-36[31-37] will be used when appropriate. [In some Jewish editions the passage is numbered as it appears in all Christian Bibles, where Chapter 31 starts with the verse that is normally the last verse in Chapter 30, namely, Jeremiah 30:25.]

[2] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:

- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "h"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

Table II-1 – Jeremiah 31:30-36[31-37]

King James Version Translation		Jewish Translation from the Hebrew		The Hebrew Text	
Jeremiah 31		Jeremiah 31		ירמיה לא	
31	Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:[i] [ii]	30	"Behold, days are coming," says the Lord, "when I will form with the House of Israel and with the House of Judah a new covenant.	הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים נְאֻם־יהוה וְכָרַתִּי אֶת־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת־בֵּית יְהוּדָה בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה׃	ל
32	Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:[i]	31	Not like the covenant that I formed with their forefathers on the day I held them by the hand to take them out of the land of Egypt, for they broke My covenant, although I was a husband unto them," says the Lord.	לֹא כַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר כָּרַתִּי אֶת־אֲבוֹתָם בְּיוֹם הֶחֱזִיקִי בְיָדָם לְהוֹצִיאָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם אֲשֶׁר־הֵמָּה הֵפֵרוּ אֶת־בְּרִיתִי וְאָנֹכִי בָּעַלְתִּי בָם נְאֻם־יהוה׃	לא
33	But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.[i] [iii]	32	"For this is the covenant that I shall form with the House of Israel after those days," says the Lord; "I will place My Torah within them, and I will inscribe it upon their heart; and I will be their God and they shall be a people for Me.	כִּי זֹאת הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר אֶכְרֹת אֶת־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל אַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים הָהֵם נְאֻם־יהוה נָתַתִּי אֶת־תּוֹרָתִי בְּקִרְבָּם וְעַל־לִבָּם אֶכְתֲּבֶנָּה וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים וְהֵמָּה יִהְיוּ־לִי לְעָם׃	לב
34	And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall **all** know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.[iv]	33	And no longer they shall teach, a man his neighbor, and a man his brother, saying, 'know the Lord,' for they shall **all** know Me, from their smallest to their greatest," says the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will no longer remember."	וְלֹא יְלַמְּדוּ עוֹד אִישׁ אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ וְאִישׁ אֶת־אָחִיו לֵאמֹר דְּעוּ אֶת־יהוה כִּי־כוּלָּם יֵדְעוּ אוֹתִי לְמִקְטַנָּם וְעַד־גְּדוֹלָם נְאֻם־יהוה כִּי אֶסְלַח לַעֲוֹנָם וּלְחַטָּאתָם לֹא אֶזְכָּר־עוֹד׃	לג
35	Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name:	34	So said the Lord, Who gives the sun to illuminate by day, the laws of the moon and the stars to illuminate at night, Who stirs up the sea to make its waves roar, the Lord of Hosts is His name:	כֹּה אָמַר יהוה נֹתֵן שֶׁמֶשׁ לְאוֹר יוֹמָם חֻקֹּת יָרֵחַ וְכוֹכָבִים לְאוֹר לָיְלָה רֹגַע הַיָּם וַיֶּהֱמוּ גַלָּיו יהוה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ׃	לד

36	If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.	35	"If these laws could depart from before Me," says the Lord, "so will the seed of Israel cease being a nation before Me for all time."	אִם יָמֻשׁוּ הַחֻקִּים הָאֵלֶּה מִלְּפָנַי נְאֻם־יהוה גַּם זֶרַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁבְּתוּ מִהְיוֹת גּוֹי לְפָנַי כָּל־הַיָּמִים׃	לה
37	Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD.	36	So said the Lord, "if the heavens above will be measured and the foundations of the earth below will be fathomed, so too will I reject all the seed of Israel because of all they did," says the Lord.	כֹּה אָמַר יהוה אִם־יִמַּדּוּ שָׁמַיִם מִלְמַעְלָה וְיֵחָקְרוּ מוֹסְדֵי־אֶרֶץ לְמָטָּה גַּם־אֲנִי אֶמְאַס בְּכָל־זֶרַע יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ נְאֻם־יהוה׃	לו

(i) Hebrews 8:8-12(KJV) – See Section III.A

(ii) Luke 22:20(KJV) - Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

2Corinthians 3:6(KJV) - Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

(iii) Hebrews 10:16(KJV) - This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

2Corinthians 3:3(KJV) - Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

(iv) 1Thessalonians 4:9(KJV) - But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

John 6:45(KJV) - It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

Romans 11:27(KJV) - For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

Hebrews 10:17(KJV) - And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

Overall, the two translations are remarkably similar; there are no major issues of mistranslation to be resolved. However, as noted in Table II-1, this passage is cross-referenced with the New Testament on several occasions and, when "quoted" in Chapter 8 of the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is subjected to significant manipulation by its author in an attempt to change the message, as will demonstrated below.

III. OVERVIEW OF CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH INTERPRETATIONS

A. The Christian Perspective

The Christian perspective on Jeremiah's new covenant is contained in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the New Testament. The author first states the rationale:

> **Hebrews 8:6-8a(KJV) – (6) But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. (7) For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. (8) For finding fault with them, he saith, …**

Following the opening phrase in Hebrews 8:8, the author continues with a heavily edited version of Jeremiah 31:30-33[31-34] that is shown below with highlights color-coded to the texts shown in Table II-1 above:

Hebrews 8:8b-12(KJV) (8) … Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: (9) Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. (10) For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: (11) And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. (12) For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

Note how the author designed this passage to "track" Jeremiah 31:30-33, as indicated via the respectively colored highlighted portions.

The author then concludes his discussion by explaining the status of the New Covenant relative to the Old Covenant:

Hebrews 8:13(KJV) - In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

The overall message here is that Jeremiah's בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה is the "Covenant of the Cross", fulfilled some 2,000 years ago when, according to Christian theology, the blood of Jesus was shed for the sins of mankind. In other words, the author proclaims that the covenant God made with Israel at Mount Sinai had expired; therefore, the Jewish people need no longer keep the commandments of the Torah – the "Old Covenant" – since salvation now comes with the belief in Jesus as high priest, sacrifice, lord, and messiah, as proclaimed in the Gospels:

Matthew 26:28(KJV) - For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

Christian theology holds that the New Covenant has replaced the existing covenant, the Torah, which was deemed old and flawed. This is the basis for the claim that Jeremiah's בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה is a prophecy fulfilled with the death of Jesus on the cross, an event that led to the writing of Christianity's New Testament, the one that, for Christians, has replaced the (Mosaic) Law.[3]

B. The Jewish Perspective

A correct reading and understanding of the Hebrew text shows unequivocally that Jeremiah 31:30-36 is not a prophecy that was fulfilled during the first century C.E., or at any other time in the past. Rather, this passage contains two of several significant prophecies from the Jewish messianic vision that are yet to be fulfilled, namely, the ingathering and restoration of the Jewish People to the Land of Israel, and the existence of a state of the universal knowledge of God.

[3] **In the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, the Greek noun** διαθήκη (*diatheke*), which means **a covenant** or **a testament**, is used for the Hebrew noun בְּרִית.

1. Ingathering and Restoration of the Jewish People

The passage begins with Jeremiah addressing both the House of Israel and the House of Judah, which indicates that he is speaking to an ingathered, but not yet united, Jewish people. This was not the situation that existed at the time those words were written, nor was it the case in the first century C.E. The House of Israel has not existed as a people from the time Assyria had exiled the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the reign of Ahaz, King of Judah, well over 700 years before the first century C.E.[4] Moreover, during the first century C.E. the Jewish people were dispersed throughout the Roman Empire and beyond. Thus, not even the House of Judah was all present in the Land of Israel at that time – the Jews had been exiled into the Diaspora and were dispersed among the nations much more than in their previous exile, in Babylon, that followed the destruction of the First Temple.

The fact that the era of which Jeremiah is speaking has not yet arrived – a future time when House of Judah and House of Israel will be restored and reunited in their rightful place, the land of Israel – is addressed elsewhere by Jeremiah:

> **Jeremiah 16:15 - But, As the Lord lives, Who brought the people of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands where He had driven them; and I will bring them back to their land that I gave to their forefathers.**

This is also foretold by several other prophets:

> **Isaiah 11:12 - And He shall carry a banner for the nations, and He shall collect the lost of Israel, and the dispersed one of Judah He shall gather from the four corners of the earth.**
>
> **Ezekiel 37:21-22 – (21) And say to them, Thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I will take the Children of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them on every side, and I will bring them into their land; (22) And I will make them into one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall no longer be two nations, and neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more.**
>
> **Zechariah 10:6 - And I will strengthen the House of Judah, and the House of Joseph I will save, and I will get them settled for I have mercy on them, and they shall be as though I had not neglected them; for I am the Lord their God, and will respond to them.**

Note how, in Jeremiah 31:30[31], the Prophet starts by speaking of "**... days are coming ...**" where both the House of Israel and the House of Judah are mentioned. Then, in Jeremiah 31:32[33], only the House of Israel is mentioned, when the Prophet speaks of an era "**... after those days ...**", i.e., the days after the scattered Jewish people are repatriated to the Land of Israel and then reunited under one kingdom called Israel.

[4] The Northern Kingdom of Israel, i.e., the House of Israel, ceased to exist when the Assyrians conquered the territory and ended the reign of Hoshea ben Elah, its last king, in 722 B.C.E.

The message here is unambiguous – the dispersed Jewish people will be returned to the Land of Israel and will be united once again as one nation, Israel, led by the promised Jewish King/Messiah.

2. Universal Knowledge of God

Jeremiah 31:33[34] is a verse in this passage that is often overlooked or ignored by Christian missionaries. This verse possesses two interesting characteristics. First, in the Hebrew text, the verse starts with the conjunction וְ (*v*^{e}), **and**, which indicates that Jeremiah 31:30-36[31-37] is not a passage made up of two separate prophecies. Rather, the conjunction, וְ, at the beginning of Jeremiah 31:33[34] connects it with the preceding verse, Jeremiah 31:32[33], which makes Jeremiah 31:33[34] a continuation of the earlier prophecy and not the start of a separate prophecy.

> **<u>Jeremiah 31:33[34]</u> – "And no longer shall they teach, a man his neighbor, and a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord', for they shall all know Me, from their smallest to their greatest," says the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will no longer remember."**

Second, this verse speaks of a time when all of Israel will be equal in the knowledge of God, i.e., in terms of their reverence for Him and walking in His ways, much in the manner that the Prophet Micah states:

> **<u>Micah 6:8</u> – Man has told you what is good; but what does the Lord demand of you? To do justice, to love loving-kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.**

According to the Hebrew Bible, this will be the prelude to a universal knowledge of God among the nations:

> **<u>Zechariah 8:23</u> - Thus said the Lord of Hosts: In those days, ten men of all the languages of the nations shall grasp and hold on to the corner of the garment of a Jewish man, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."**

Is there a universal knowledge of God in the world today? If that were the case, then why are Christian missionaries still spread all over the globe, spending many millions of dollars annually, trying to spread the “good news”, teaching people to "know the (Christian) Lord"? Is this not in complete contradiction to Jeremiah 31:33[34]? The presence of Christian missionaries throughout the world is a *de-facto* admission that this prophecy has not yet been fulfilled! *What does this imply concerning the Christian "New Covenant"?* Bad news!!!

The message of Jeremiah 31:33[34], about a universal knowledge of God in the messianic era, is also echoed by other prophets:

> **<u>Isaiah 11:9</u> - They shall neither harm nor destroy on My entire Holy Mountain; for the earth shall be full of knowledge of the Lord, as the waters of the sea cover up [the sea floor].**

Zechariah 14:9 - And the Lord shall be King over all the earth; on that day shall the Lord be One, and His Name One.

The Jewish perspective correctly declares that the prophecy of Jeremiah's בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה has not yet come to pass; its fulfillment is coupled with Israel being united again in the Land of Israel and with a prevailing universal knowledge of God.

IV. DOES THIS PASSAGE FORETELL THE ADVENT OF THE CHRISTIAN NEW TESTAMENT?

The Christian and Jewish perspectives cannot both be valid. Though the Jewish perspective clearly demonstrates how this messianic passage has not yet been realized, there still remains the issue of the nature of Jeremiah's בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה, which is explicitly mentioned in Jeremiah 31:30[31], and then alluded to throughout the rest of the passage. Further analysis of the passage helps to resolve this issue.

A. An Attempt to Reverse the Prophetic Message

In his deliberate revision of the original text of Jeremiah 31:31[32], the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews intended to solve a serious theological problem for Christianity – the prophesied eternity of the Jewish people and the Torah – he attempted to reverse the Prophet's original message.

Hebrews 8:9 appears to be "quoting" Jeremiah 31:31[32]. However, the Hebrew phrase indicate that the phrase אֲשֶׁר־הֵמָּה הֵפֵרוּ אֶת־בְּרִיתִי וְאָנֹכִי בָּעַלְתִּי בָם in Jeremiah 31:31[32] is rendered in both Jewish and KJV translations as, "**for they broke my covenant, although I was a(n) husband unto them**", while at Hebrews 8:9 it is rendered, "**because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not**". The highlighted phrases are obviously not congruent in their context.

The Hebrew term for the English phrase **I was a husband** is בָּעַלְתִּי (***ba'ALti***). The identically conjugated verb appears also, and in the same context, at Jeremiah 3:14. The Hebrew root verb בעל (***BET-Ayin-LAmed***) is most commonly applied throughout the Hebrew Bible in the context of **[to be] espoused**. Of its 16 applications, in 11 cases the verb בעל refers to **espousal**, in one case it is used in a metaphorical sense, and in the remaining four cases it is used in the context of **[to be] a master** over someone or something. The Hebrew noun בַּעַל (***BA'al***) derives from this root verb and is commonly used in the Hebrew Bible. This noun can mean **a husband** (either married or betrothed) or **a master** and, in various combinations with other terms, it is used to describe someone who possesses certain attributes, qualities, or skills.

So, how can the state of "being a husband" in a passage be understood, or turned into, a state of "not regarding" in its alleged "mirror image"? Clearly, this can only be done through a deliberate attempt to change the context. Relative to the verb בעל in the context of espousal or mastership that is used at Jeremiah 31:31[32], disregarding someone, as Hebrews 8:9 has it, would be the *antithesis*

of being a husband or master of someone. To get a good measure of the huge gap that exists between Hebrews 8:9 and Jeremiah 31:31[32], contrast the message from Hebrews 8:9 with the message from following passage:

> **Hosea 2:21-22[19-20] – (21) And I will betroth you to Me forever, and I will betroth you to Me with righteousness and with justice and with loving-kindness and with mercy. (22) And I will betroth you to Me with faith, and you shall know the Lord.**

These two verses are recited as a Jew dons his phylacteries in the morning, a ritual that carries him back to the Revelation at Mt. Sinai, when God effected a 'spiritual marriage' with Israel, with the Torah as dowry – this was for eternity.

Another interesting aspect of this attempt to revise Jeremiah's original message is that it actually ends up contradicting one of the main messages of the Gospels – that Jesus did not come to change "The Law" but to fulfill it:

> **Matthew 5:17-19(KJV) – (17) Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. (18) For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. (19) Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.**

Oh, the tangled webs they weave in their effort to deceive.[5]

B. Will the New Covenant Involve A New Torah/Law?

What is a covenant anyway? *The American Heritage Dictionary* has the following definition:[6]

> **covenant** *n*. 1. A binding agreement made between two or more persons or parties; compact. 2. *Law.* **a**. A formal sealed agreement or contract. **b**. A suit to recover damages for violation of such a contract.

In other words, a covenant is a contractual agreement between two parties. Concerning the case in point here, the Covenant is merely the agreement made by the Israelites to accept and obey the Torah in return for the promises made by God.

The opening promise to Israel is made just before the revelation at Mount Sinai:

> **Exodus 19:5 - And now, if you will obey Me and keep My covenant, you shall be to Me a treasure out of all peoples, for Mine is the entire earth.**

The T's&C's (terms and conditions) of this contract consist of blessings (rewards) that would accrue by obedience and warnings and curses (consequences) that

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[5] A paraphrase of a classic quote from Sir Walter Scott's poem *Marmion*, Canto VI. Stanza 17:
"O, what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practise to deceive!"

[6] *The American Heritage Dictionary*, p. 334, Second College Edition, Houghton Mifflin Company (1991)

would result from disobedience. Detailed blessings earned by obedience are enumerated in Leviticus 26:3-13, in Deuteronomy 11:13-25, and in Deuteronomy 28:1-14. The wages of disobedience are detailed in Leviticus 26:14-39, and again in Deuteronomy 28:15-68.

The "contractual agreement" along with its "T's&C's" were presented to the Israelites following the national revelation at Mount Sinai, and the people voiced their acceptance:

> **Exodus 24:3-4,7 – (3) And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances, and all the people answered in unison and said, "All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do." (4) And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and he arose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and twelve monuments for the twelve tribes of Israel.**
> **(7) And he [Moses] took the Book of the Covenant [סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית (*SEfer ha'BRIT*)] and read it for the people to hear, and they said, "All that the Lord spoke we will do and we will hear."**

It is important to understand and remember that the Covenant is the contractual agreement *to obey* the Torah; it *is not* the Torah itself. The Torah contains the precepts that are to be obeyed, and that is why it is referred to as סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית, **the *Book* of the Covenant**. Thus, even if Israel were to break its agreement to obey the Torah, that does not change or invalidate the Torah!

The fact that this בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה will not replace the Torah is noted by Jeremiah:

> **Jeremiah 31:32[33] – "For this is the covenant that I shall form with the House of Israel after those days," says the Lord, "I will place My Torah [תּוֹרָתִי (*toraTI*)] within them, and I will inscribe it upon their heart; and I will be their God and they shall be a people for Me."**

The Hebrew term תּוֹרָה (***toRAH***) is applied in the Hebrew Bible in two general contexts. First, it is used to refer to **rules**, **doctrines**, or **other instructions for behavior**, i.e., laws, statutes, and ordinances. Second, it is used to refer to the **Mosaic Law**, which is commonly called **Torah**. The context of the Hebrew term תּוֹרָתִי, **My Torah**, in Jeremiah 31:32 is unambiguous – it refers to the Torah. This is consistent with the way Jeremiah uses the root noun תּוֹרָה throughout his Book, in which the noun appears in various forms on 11 occasions. The remaining ten instances of תּוֹרָה in the Book of Jeremiah are at Jeremiah 2:8, 6:19, 8:8, 9:12[13], 16:11, 18:18, 26:4, 32:23, 44:10,23. In all ten cases the reference is to the Torah, as it also is at Jeremiah 31:32[33]. It is interesting to note that even the KJV translators render all 11 instances as "the law", or "my law", or "his law", as appropriate in the respective passages, clearly indicating this is "The Law", the term commonly used by New Testament authors in referring to the Mosaic Law, i.e., the Torah.

Sidebar note: Jeremiah 31:32[33] would have been the ideal place for God to let us know, through the Prophet, that this new Covenant will be a **new Torah**. All that would have had to be said in Hebrew is תּוֹרָה חֲדָשָׁה (***toRAH hadaSHAH***), **a new Torah**, or

תּוֹרָתִי הַחֲדָשָׁה (***toraTI ha'hadaSHAH***), **My new Torah**, instead of תּוֹרָתִי, and the deed would have been accomplished.

Therefore, Jeremiah is not speaking of a new Covenant that replaces the previous one. Rather, he is referring to a *renewed* Covenant, i.e., the original contractual agreement that was made at Mount Sinai will be renewed.

C. The New Covenant vs. the Original Sinai Covenant

In Jeremiah 31:31[32], the Prophet declares the new covenant to be:

> **Not like the covenant that I formed with their forefathers on the day I took them by the hand to take them out of the land of Egypt, for they broke My covenant …**

How will this new Covenant differ from the original Sinai Covenant? The only difference between the two covenants is the place where סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית resides. In the original Sinai Covenant, it was placed in the mouths of the Israelites:

> **<u>Exodus 13:9</u> - And it shall be to you for a sign upon your hand, and for a memorial between your eyes, in order that the Torah of the Lord shall be in your mouth; for with a mighty hand has the Lord brought you out of Egypt.**

And this contract was verbally agreed to, as indicated in Exodus 24:3,7 above. On the other hand, according to Jeremiah 31:32[33], God says, "**… I will place My Torah within them and I will inscribe it upon their heart …**", i.e., the new Covenant will be placed within the people. In other words, this new Covenant will simply be an integral part of the people of Israel and, thus, it will become just part of the Jewish way of life.

D. The Everlasting Sinai Covenant

Christian missionaries often use the phrase, "**for they broke My covenant**", from Jeremiah 31:31[32], to support their claim that the original Sinai Covenant is no longer in force. After all, they claim, it is clearly stated here that Israel broke the contract and, therefore, the New Testament is the new Covenant prophesied by Jeremiah, and it replaces the "Old Covenant/Testament".

Is this claim valid? Evidently, those who make this claim do not understand the difference between "the Covenant" and "the Book of the Covenant", which was explained above. The Hebrew Bible teaches that, although the people of Israel often fell short of fulfilling their end of the agreement made at Mount Sinai and, in effect, broke the Covenant, God has stated on many occasions that He will not break His Covenant with Israel:

> **<u>Leviticus 26:44-45</u> – (44) And despite all this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not despise them nor will I reject them to annihilate them, thereby breaking My covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God. (45) And I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt before the eyes of the nations, to be a God to them; I am the Lord.**

Judges 2:1 - And an angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said [in God's name], "I will bring you up from Egypt, and I have brought you to the land which I swore to your forefathers, and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you.'"

Ezekiel 16:59-60 – (59) For thus said the Lord God [to Jerusalem]: "I have done with you in accordance to that which you have done, that you have despised an oath in breaking a covenant. (60) Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you an everlasting covenant.

Psalms 105:8-10 – (8) He has remembered His covenant forever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations. (9) That which He had made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac; (10) And He established it for Jacob as a law, and for Israel as an everlasting covenant;

There is no argument about the fact that Israel has strayed from the path many times since the promise was made at Mount Sinai, and for which Israel has suffered the consequences. Yet, the Hebrew Bible clearly shows that God will neither break that Covenant nor replace the Torah - the Torah is eternal!

E. Additional Difficulties with the Christian Interpretation

Because Christian missionaries concentrate on the first few verses, discussions and analyses of Jeremiah 31:30-36[31-37] generally tend to focus on the first half of the passage while the remainder of the passage is often given short shrift or ignored, even though it contains additional information that Christian missionaries would find quite challenging to their massage.

First, it was already noted earlier that Jeremiah 31:33[34] is a continuation of the prophecy from the previous verse, not a separate prophetic statement, and it speaks of the universal knowledge of God. But note how this verse ends:

Jeremiah 31:33[34] – … says the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will no longer remember."

Once Israel has been gathered in the Land of Israel from the Diaspora and this *renewed* covenant is placed in the hearts of the people, their past sins will be unconditionally forgiven and forgotten by God. Not only is there no mention of any required sacrificial offerings for this to take place, there is no mention here of God sending someone (His "only begotten Son" to Christians) to take on Israel's sins and serve as a sacrificial offering for the purpose of expiating these sins.

Second, the last two verses of the passage, vs. 35-36[36-37] unambiguously affirm the continuity of Israel as God's chosen nation:

Jeremiah 31:35-36[36-37] – (35) "If these laws could depart from before Me," says the Lord, "so will the seed of Israel cease being a nation before Me for all time."
(36) So said the Lord, "if the heavens above will be measured and the foundations of the earth below will be fathomed, so too will I reject all the seed of Israel because of all they did," says the Lord.

Jeremiah uses the immutable laws of nature, stated in Jeremiah 31:34[35] as metaphors, to ascertain Israel's status as an eternal nation before God,

regardless of its past sinfulness. This invalidates the "Replacement Theology" followed by some segments within Christianity, which is based on the (false) premise that, because of its stubborn refusal to accept Jesus, God has rejected Israel and replaced it with Christians as His chosen people.

The evidence presented Sections IV.A-E above illustrates how the claim by Christian missionaries, that Jeremiah's prophecy points to the New Testament, contradicts the message of the Hebrew Bible. Quite to the contrary, the Hebrew Bible establishes the eternity of both the original Covenant and the Torah, along with the eternity of Israel as God's chosen nation.

V. SUMMARY

The analysis presented in this essay demonstrates that the correct reading and interpretation of Jeremiah 31:30-36[31-37] refutes the claims made by Christian missionaries, and exposes the attempted revision by author of the Epistle to the Hebrews of Jeremiah's prophetic message concerning the eternity of the Jewish people and the Torah and turn it into a prophecy about the advent of Jesus and Christianity's New Testament.

Throughout the Hebrew Bible prophets foretell that, in the messianic era, the Jewish people will be observing the commandments of the Torah:

> **Isaiah 2:3 - And many people shall go and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the House of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths;" for out of Zion shall Torah emerge, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.**
>
> **Ezekiel 37:24 - And My servant David shall be king over them, and one shepherd shall shall be for them all; and they shall follow My ordinances, and observe My statutes, and perform them.**
>
> **Malachi 3:22[4:4] - Remember the Torah of Moses My servant; that which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, statutes and ordinances.**

It is evident that Jeremiah's use of the term בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה, **a new covenant**, does not involve the replacement of the (eternal) Torah by the New Testament. Rather, it signals a renewal of the original Sinai Covenant, which was declared to be everlasting, through its placement within us along with סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית, **the Book of the Covenant**, to make them an inseparable part of the Jewish way of life. The term בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה would be meaningless in any context other than one that describes the revitalized original Sinai Covenant, along with the Torah, which cannot be replaced, superseded, or rescinded.

<u>DEBUNKING "PROOF TEXTS" FROM THE PROVERBS</u>[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

The set of "messianic prophecies" identified by Christians in the Christian "Old Testament" is not congruent with the set of "messianic agenda items" developed by the Jewish prophets in the Hebrew Bible. A detailed comparison of the Christian and Jewish perspectives on "messianic prophecy" is presented in the series of essays on the Psalms and will not be repeated here.[2,3,4,5,6,7,8]

Among the hundreds of alleged "messianic prophecy"-“fulfillment” pairs on the *reference list* used in the essays on the “proof texts” in the Psalms are three passages from the Book of Proverbs.[9]

In this essay, these three claimed "messianic prophecies" in the Book of Proverbs and their respective "fulfillments" in the New Testament are analyzed, and the claims of their validity tested.

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:

- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as “<u>h</u>”
  - The letter כ is transliterated as “ch”
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as “k”
  - The letter ק is transliterated as “q”
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted “e” following the consonant
  - There is no “doubling” of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

[2] Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms, Part 1 – Psalms 8, 16, 18 - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt1.pdf

[3] Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms, Part 2 – Psalms 27, 31, 34, 35, 38 - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt2.pdf

[4] Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms, Part 3 – Psalms 40, 41, 45 - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt3.pdf

[5] Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms, Part 4 – Psalms 55, 68, 78, 80, and 89 – http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt4.pdf

[6] Debunking “Proof Texts” from the Psalms, Part 5 – Psalms 69 – http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt5.pdf

[7] Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms, Part 6 – Psalms 102, 109, 118, and 132 – http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt6.pdf

[8] *Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms [Part 7: The "Big Picture"* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt7.pdf

[9] *<u>Jesus is the Messiah: The Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled By Jesus Christ Ordered by Category</u>* - http://contenderministries.org/prophecy/jesusmessiah2.php

II. ANALYSIS OF CLAIMED "MESSIANIC PROPHECIES" AND THEIR "FULFILLMENTS"

To say that a prophecy has been fulfilled means that the foretold event, condition, or situation has happened, and that one no longer needs to await its completion or fulfillment. On the other hand, a prophecy that has not yet happened, or is yet to be completed, remains a prophecy not fulfilled.

The items typically claimed by Christians to be "messianic prophecy" often consist of a short passage, a single verse, or even a portion of a verse, from the Christian "Old Testament", and the same is true of the respective texts in the New Testament that are claimed to be accounts of "fulfillment"

The "messianic prophecies" claimed to be present in a given proverb and the respective accounts of their "fulfillment" from the New Testament are addressed in the following subsections. The analysis helps determine whether these pairs of passages in the Christian "Old Testament" and New Testament qualify as "messianic prophecy" and its "fulfillment", respectively.

A. Proverbs 8

The *reference list* indicates that Proverbs 8 contains one "messianic prophecy" that is "fulfilled" according to the New Testament, as shown in Table II.A-1.

Table II.A-1 – Claimed "Messianic Prophecy" and its "Fulfillment"

Statement	Citations	
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"
The Messiah would be from everlasting	Proverbs 8:22-23	John 17:5

1. Overview

Proverbs 8 and 9 are discourses on the nature of wisdom. The eighth chapter in the Book of Proverbs addresses the excellence of wisdom, a metaphoric reference to the Torah. Following summary of this chapter:[10]

Verses 1-11 - **Wisdom's (Torah's) call, in which she invites all to learn from her.** She proclaims the delights of God's teachings (Torah), which brings happiness and life, and declares that her moral value is higher than all earthly riches.

Verses 12-21 - **Wisdom (Torah) speaks for herself about her attributes.** She is the source of the truest success. This is the discipline that wisdom proclaims, and only the humble and truthful are allowed to discover her treasures and truth. By enduring themselves with the wisdom of Torah, kings become righteous sovereigns, leaders manifest leadership, princes gain authority, and judges remain dedicated to truth and justice. The Torah is generous to those who love her.

[10] This outline is based on the commentary for Proverbs 8 in *The Stone Edition Tanach*, p. 1579, Mesorah Publications, 1996), and in *Soncino Books of the Bible – Proverbs*, Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, Editor, pp. 44-51, The Soncino Press (1992)

Verses 22-31 -	**Wisdom (Torah) describes her role at Creation.** She preceded everything, and is the "blueprint" of Creation. God created the Torah before He created the universe[11]; it is manifest in Creation, preserves the world, and is a guide to all mankind.
Verses 32-36 -	**Wisdom's (Torah's) closing appeal to follow the path she paves.** She advises us to be wise, to follow Torah and its teachings. This path will lead the Jew to fulfillment, "Hearken unto discipline and grow wise." Only by unswerving obedience to Torah can we succeed.

2. Investigating the claimed "Messianic Prophecy" [and "Fulfillment"]

a. *The Messiah would be from everlasting*

The relevant texts from the King James Version (KJV) "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table II.A.2.a-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

<u>Table II.A.2.a-1</u> – Proverbs 8:22-23 and John 17:5

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Proverbs 8:22-23	**John 17:5**	**Proverbs 8:22-23**
22. The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. 23. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.	And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.	22. The Lord acquired me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old. 23. I was enthroned from everlasting, from the beginning, from before the earth [existed].

The two verses from the Hebrew Bible embody the concept that wisdom (i.e., the Torah) served as God's "blueprint" for Creation, an idea that is also reflected elsewhere in the Book of Proverbs:

> **<u>Proverbs 3:19</u> – The Lord founded the earth with wisdom; [He] established the heavens with discernment.**

The notion that wisdom preceded Creation must be understood in a logical sense rather than within the framework of time, which itself was part of Creation – a "plan" was necessary prior to the act of Creation, as indicated in the opening verse of a correct translation of the so-called "proof text":

> **<u>Proverbs 8:22</u> - The Lord acquired me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old.**

The "fulfillment" text appears to echo wisdom's words, and ascribes them to Jesus, who is claimed to have existed prior to Creation. However, this

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[11] According to the Jewish Sages, seven things were created before the world was created, one of which is the Torah. (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *P[e]SACHIM*, Folio 54a, and Tractate *N[e]DARIM*, Folio 39b)

assignment creates a serious logical problem for a foundational concept of Christian theology. Namely, that Jesus, as God, was "the alpha" [first] and "the omega" [last] (see Revelation 1:8,11, 21:6, 22:13), i.e., he was not created or formed, and that he is "eternal". Whoever selected this passage as the “fulfillment” account apparently ignored the rest of this chapter since wisdom states in verses 24&25 that she was _formed_ before the waters and mountains appeared.

The Hebrew conjugated verb used in verses 24&25 is חוֹלָלְתִּי (***h*oLALti**), **I was formed**, which derives from the root verb חיל (***H*ET-YOD-LAMed**), **[to] give birth**, **[to] bring forth**, **[to] form** (also **[to] tremble** [from pangs of birth, or from fear]):

> **Proverbs 8:24-25 – (24) I was created [חוֹלָלְתִּי] when there were yet no deeps, when there were no fountains replete with water. (25) I was created [חוֹלָלְתִּי] before the mountains were sunk, before the hills;**

> **Proverbs 8:24-25(KJV) – (24) When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. (25) Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth:**

The identically conjugated verb, חוֹלָלְתִּי, appears only one additional time in the Hebrew Bible, in the following passage:

> **Psalms 51:7 – Behold, with iniquity I was formed [חוֹלָלְתִּי], and with sin my mother conceived me.**

> **Proverbs 51:5(KJV) – Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.**

King David, the speaker here, makes a statement about his own birth. Therefore, the fact that wisdom was created and King David was formed eliminates the possibility that Jesus could be called "wisdom" and thereby become deified. In fact, by the accounts in the New Testament, Jesus cannot even be a personification of wisdom since he had to acquire it:

> **Luke 2:52(KJV) - And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.**

How could God, being all-wisdom, be described as increasing in wisdom?

Conclusion: Proverbs 8:22-23 is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

B. Proverbs 30

The *reference list* indicates that Proverbs 30 contains two "messianic prophecies" that are "fulfilled" according to the New Testament, as shown in Table II.B-1.

<u>Table II.B-1</u> – Claimed "Messianic Prophecies" and their "Fulfillments"

Statement	Citations	
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"
The Messiah would ascend and descend from heaven	Proverbs 30:4a	John 3:13
God would have a Son	Proverbs 30:4b	Matthew 3:16-17

1. Overview

The superscription attributes Proverb 30 to *AGUR the son of YaQEH*, yet the authorship of this chapter in the Book of Proverbs remains uncertain. Some say this is a reference to King Solomon, arguing that it was common in those days to use poetic metaphors instead of actual names to identify someone (this is similar to the later usage of pseudonyms). Others postulate that the author, *AGUR the son of YaQEH*, lived during a later era, and both Scriptural and Rabbinic evidence has been offered to support the notion that the Book of Proverbs, in its present form, is not the work of a single author. Rather, that it is a compilation of ethical works spanning a period of several hundred years, beginning at the time of King Solomon and ending during the era of the scribes who followed Ezra (see, e.g., Proverbs 25:1 and Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *BAva BATHra*, Folio 15a, respectively).

Regardless of who authored it, Proverbs 30 appears to be the product of an inquiring mind that was intrigued by the mysteries and problems of human existence.

2. Investigating claimed "Messianic Prophecies" [and "Fulfillments"]

Having this verse divided into two segments, each of which representing a separate so-called "proof text" and "messianic prophecy", makes the response somewhat clumsy. Nevertheless, the respective responses will follow this division as much as possible.

a. *The Messiah would ascend and descend from heaven*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table II.B.2.a-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

<u>Table II.B.2.a-1</u> – Proverbs 30:4a and John 3:13

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Proverbs 30:4a	**John 3:13**	**Proverbs 30:4a**
Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? [what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?]	And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.	Who ascended to heaven and descended? Who gathered wind in his fists? Who wrapped the waters in a garment? Who established all the ends of the earth? [What is his name and what is the name of his son, if you know?]

One way to understand this passage is as a series of rhetorical questions that describe the infinite nature of God.[12] Their purpose is to point out that it is impossible for any mortal, such as *AGUR* who admits he cannot even understand the workings of the human mind, to understand the way that the "Infinite Mind" functions. To have this knowledge would mean that one also had to be able to accomplish the following:

- **Ascend to heaven and descend, which only God had done** (Genesis 11:7; Exodus 19:18)
- **Gather the wind, an act of God** (Amos 4:13; Psalms 135:7)
- **Wrap the water in a garment, as God stores the water in the clouds for the rains, without which there is no existence** (Job 26:8)
- **Establish the boundaries of the earth as the place of human habitation, separated from the oceans, as God had done at Creation** (Genesis 1:9-10)

Could any mortal have done all this?

In quite a different approach to this passage, RaSHI considers these feats as metaphoric representations of accomplishments by Moses:[13]

- **Who ascended to heaven and descended? Moses ascended to heaven to receive the Torah and bring it down to earth for Israel** (Exodus 19:3,20-25, 24:12-18, 31:18, 32:15-16, 34:1-4)
- **Who gathered wind in his fists? Moses controlled the winds[14]** (Exodus 10:13,18-19; 14:21)
- **Who wrapped the waters in a garment? Moses restricted the waters of the sea** (Exodus 14:15-22,26-29)

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[12] See <u>*Soncino Books of the Bible – Proverbs*</u>, Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, Editor, pp. 44-51, The Soncino Press (1992)

[13] <u>*The Stone Edition Tanach*</u>, p. 1612, Mesorah Publications, Ltd. (1996)

[14] In his Metzudath David commentary (<u>*The Book of Proverbs*</u>, pp. 188-189, Judaica Press, Inc. [1993]), Rabbi David Altschuler contends this actually alludes to the 6th plague, boils, which Aaron and Moses brought upon Egypt by taking handfuls of soot from the furnace and throwing it skyward to let the wind distribute it over Egypt (Exodus 9:8-10). It was as though Moses gathered the wind in his fists and harnessed it to scatter the soot all over the entire land.

- Who established all the ends of the earth? Moses erected the Tabernacle[15] (Exodus 40:17-18)

Who else, other than Moses, accomplished all this?

The "fulfillment" text ascribes the ascent and descent to and from heaven to Jesus and no one else, even though Proverbs 30:4a is neither directly referenced nor quoted in the New Testament. This presupposes the deity of Jesus and his incarnation in the flesh as a man, which has already been disproved elsewhere.[16] Although Christianity considers the appearance of Jesus as a man, posed in the first question as having "**... descended [from heaven] ...**", to be part of the messianic advent, the actions covered by the remaining questions in the first segment of the verse were all completed at the time of Creation, thousands of years prior to start of the Christian era. [The impossibility of this passage speaking about Jesus becomes much more obvious when the second segment of the verse is analyzed.]

Conclusion: Proverbs 30:4a is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

b. *God would have a Son*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table II.B.2.b-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table II.B.2.b-1 – Proverbs 30:4b and Matthew 3:16-17

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Proverbs 30:4b	**Matthew 3:16-17**	**Proverbs 30:4b**
[Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth?] what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?	16. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: 17. And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.	[Who ascended to heaven and descended? Who gathered wind in his fists? Who wrapped the waters in a garment? Who established all the ends of the earth?] What is his name and what is the name of his son, if you know?

According to the first view presented earlier, the last two in the series of rhetorical questions about the infinite nature of God are idioms that convey a tone of sarcasm:

[15] The Sages point out, "If not for the service [of the Tabernacle and Torah] the foundations of heaven and earth would not have been established." (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *MegiLAH*, Folio 31a)
[16] *Why Jews Must Reject the Belief in Jesus* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/WhyRejectJC.pdf

- **"What is his name?"** This is a sarcastic question by which the one asking it really means: "If you assert that any man possessed these powers, then who is he?"

- **"What is the name of his son?"** This is more sarcasm, where the one asking the question really means: "should you claim that such a person has existed, let me test your knowledge of him; if you give me his name, what more do you know of him? What was his son called?"

If the author of this proverb was referring to God in verse 4, then the question "*what is His name?*" would be rhetorical since, in general, most adults know the Creator's name in their own language (and religion). So, the message conveyed by this sarcasm is that there is no mortal who accomplished all of this. Moreover, it does not say that "the son" did any of this; rather, it can be only the work of the Creator.

According to RaSHI, the last two questions test the knowledge of anyone who may claim to know someone who accomplished these deeds:

- **"What is his name and what is the name of his son, if you know?"** This is the English translation of a common Hebrew idiom, מַה־שְּׁמוֹ (***MAH-SHMO***), **what is his name**, which may be paraphrased as follows: "If you say to us that there already was someone such as he [the one all these questions are about], then tell us what his son's name is. Identify the family that has descended from him, and we will know who he is."

Therefore, the issue here is not _*who this someone's son is*_, the question is about _*who this someone is*_, and about identifying that individual. There is only one other application of the idiom מַה-שְּׁמוֹ in the Hebrew Bible, and the context in which it is used in that particular passage helps clarify the point:

Exodus 3:13 - And Moses said to God, "Behold I come to the children of Israel, and I say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name? [מַה־שְּׁמוֹ]' what shall I say to them?"

In this verse, "**What is his name?**" – מַה-שְּׁמוֹ – is not an inquiry about God's name. After all, Moses came to the Israelites saying, "**... The God of your fathers has sent me to you ...**". Surely, they knew who the God of their fathers was and what He was called. After all, the notion of an "Unknown God" is unbiblical. The noun "name" is used in the Hebrew Bible in more ways than just to identify someone or something. It can be an indication of fame (e.g., Genesis 11:4), and it can also be synonymous with might (e.g., Exodus 9:16). Thus, in Exodus 3:13, "**What is his name?**" means, "*What mighty deeds can you recount for Him; what is his power, that we [the Israelites] should listen to the message you bring from Him?*"

The use of the idiom מַה-שְּׁמוֹ at Proverbs 30:4b is similar in that the purpose of asking about the person's name is to validate his credentials.

Although there is no denying that all these feats credited here to Moses were enabled by God, it was Moses who carried them out.

Both Jewish interpretations of Proverbs 30:4, although quite different, are consistent with Scripture and, therefore, are acceptable.

The "fulfillment" text, on the other hand, attempts to assign to Jesus a realization of the idioms used in Proverbs 30:4b immediately following his baptism. Yet, even if an actual "Father-son" relationship were implied in Proverbs 30:4, no evidentiary support is found in the Hebrew Bible for the Christian doctrine that Jesus was God's "begotten" son, i.e., that he was fathered by God through an act of procreation, as claimed in the New Testament. The Hebrew Bible actually contains several accounts of "son(s)" of God: Israel (Exodus 4:22; Deuteronomy 14:1; Hosea 2:1, 11:1), King David (Psalms 2:7), King Solomon (2Samuel 7:14; 1Chronicles 22:9-10), and Angels (Job 1:6; Daniel 3:25). However, none of these represents a physical (biological) “son of God” in the familial sense; they merely enjoyed a special relationship with God.

Conclusion: Proverbs 30:4b is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

III. SUMMARY

This study investigated three so-called "proof texts" in the Book of Proverbs, which are claimed to be Christian "messianic prophecies", along with their respective claims of "fulfillment" in the New Testament. The analysis addressed the content, context, and correspondence between each pair of texts in order to assess the validity of the claims. The results of the investigation are summarized in Table III-1.

Table III-1 – Claimed "messianic prophecies" in Proverbs 8 and 30, and their "fulfillments"

Statement	Citations		Valid?
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
The Messiah would be from everlasting	Proverbs 8:22-23	John 17:5	NO
The Messiah would ascend and descend from heaven	Proverbs 30:4a	John 3:13	NO
God would have a Son	Proverbs 30:4b	Matthew 3:16-17	NO

It was demonstrated in all three cases that each alleged "messianic prophecy' was the result of an attempt to retrofit New Testament accounts to appear as realizations of claimed prophetic accounts in the Christian "Old Testament". It was also shown how these false interpretations resulted from the disregard of context and the lack of a correct understanding of the original Hebrew text.

As was noted in the analysis, none of these passages in the Christian "Old Testament" are directly referenced or quoted in the New Testament. This would indicate that they were not considered prophetic messianic texts by the authors of the New Testament. Rather, it is likely that they were fashioned into "messianic prophecies" at later times in the history of Christianity.

Finally, by focusing on Jesus, the central figure in the Christian messianic vision, not on the conditions that will prevail in the world due to his accomplishments, these three claimed Christian "messianic prophecy" and "fulfillment" pairs continue to follow the Messiah-centric pattern that emerged from the earlier study of "proof texts" in the Psalms. This is, once again, inconsistent with the messianic vision of Judaism, which is based on the Hebrew Bible, and is, therefore, generally devoid of any prophetic content.

PSALMS 110 – A DIVINE PRIESTLY KING FROM A NEW PRIESTHOOD? NOT!!![1]

I. INTRODUCTION

The many direct references and allusions in the New Testament to the 110th chapter in the Book of Psalms has turned it into the source of several popular so-called “messianic prophecies”, the alleged fulfillment of which, by Jesus, are claimed to be the referenced accounts in the New Testament.

Consequently, Psalms 110 contains a number significant so-called "proof texts" in the portfolio of the Christian missionary, and these allegedly foretell the divinity, priesthood, and proximity to God of the Christian messiah, which, along with other attributes, are described in various accounts throughout the New Testament.

A rigorous analysis of the Hebrew text in this psalm, and its placement in the proper context, demonstrate how these claims have no support from within the Hebrew Bible.

II. COMPARING CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF KEY VERSES

Side-by-side English renditions and the Hebrew text of the first five verses from the 110th chapter in the Book of Psalms are displayed in Table II-1. Some of the verses from the King James Version (KJV) “Old Testament” translation point to cross-referenced passages in the New Testament. These references are taken from the New American Standard Bible (NASB). However, the corresponding passages below the table are quoted from the KJV for consistency.

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:

- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as “h̲”
  - The letter כ is transliterated as “ch”
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as “k”
  - The letter ק is transliterated as “q”
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted “e” following the consonant
  - There is no “doubling” of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

<u>Table II-1</u> – Psalms 110:1-2, 4-5

	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	
	Psalms 110		תהילים קי	
1	The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.(i)	Of David a psalm. The word of the Lord (יהוה [*YHVH*]) to my lord (לַאדֹנִי [*ladoni*] (*or*, to my master): "Sit at My right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool at your feet."	לְדָוִד מִזְמוֹר נְאֻם יהוה ׀ לַאדֹנִי שֵׁב לִימִינִי עַד־אָשִׁית אֹיְבֶיךָ הֲדֹם לְרַגְלֶיךָ׃	א
2	The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.	The Lord (יהוה [*YHVH*]) will send the staff of your might from Zion; rule in the midst of your enemies!	מַטֵּה עֻזְּךָ יִשְׁלַח יהוה מִצִּיּוֹן רְדֵה בְּקֶרֶב אֹיְבֶיךָ׃	ב
4	The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.(ii)	The Lord (יהוה [*YHVH*]) has sworn, and will not change His mind, "on my word, you are to serve for ever, King of Righteousness."	נִשְׁבַּע יהוה ׀ וְלֹא יִנָּחֵם אַתָּה־כֹהֵן לְעוֹלָם עַל־דִּבְרָתִי מַלְכִּי־צֶדֶק׃	ד
5	The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.(iii)	The Lord (אֲדֹנָי [*A-doNAI*]) is at your right hand, He has crushed kings in the day of His wrath.	אֲדֹנָי עַל־יְמִינְךָ מָחַץ בְּיוֹם־אַפּוֹ מְלָכִים׃	ה

(i) **<u>Direct "quotes"</u>:**

<u>Matthew 22:44(KJV)</u> - The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?

<u>Mark 12:36(KJV)</u> - For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

<u>Luke 20:42-43(KJV)</u> – (42) And David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, (43) Till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

<u>Acts 2:34-35(KJV)</u> – (34) For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, (35) Until I make thy foes thy footstool.

<u>Hebrews 1:13(KJV)</u> - But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

<u>Allusions</u>:

<u>Matthew 26:64(KJV)</u> - Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

<u>Colossians 3:1(KJV)</u> - If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

<u>Hebrews 8:1(KJV)</u> - Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;

<u>Hebrews 10:12(KJV)</u> - But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

<u>1Corinthians 15:25(KJV)</u> - For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

(ii) Hebrews 5:6,10(KJV) – (6) As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. (10) Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

Hebrews 6:20(KJV) - Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Hebrews 7:17,21(KJV) – (17) For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

(21) (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)

(iii) Romans 2:5(KJV) - But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

A comparison of the two English translations indicates that major discrepancies exist between the Jewish and Christian renditions, particularly as it concerns the opening verse, and these will be taken up in the analysis that follows later. It is also worthwhile to note that, unlike most Christian Bibles, the KJV discards the superscription "**Of David a Psalm.**" that is part of the opening verse.

III. OVERVIEW OF CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH INTERPRETATIONS

A. Overview of the Christian Perspective

Christians view Psalms 110 as a messianic psalm fulfilled by Jesus as both the Messiah (who, in Christian theology, is greater than his ancestor, King David) and, for Trinitarians, is a divine being ("God the Son" in the Trinity).

The many direct references and allusions to it indicate that the authors of the New Testament had a great interest in this psalm. According to the Christian view, the explicit application of this psalm to Jesus is noted in several ways:

- **By Jesus himself (e.g., Matthew 22:41-45; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44)**
- **By others (e.g., Acts 2:33-35; Hebrews 1:13; 7:20-24)**
- **By frequent references to its language throughout the New Testament (e.g., 1Corinthians 15:25; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 10:12-13)**

The extensive usage of Psalms 110 in the New Testament leaves no doubt in the mind of a Christian believer about its purely prophetic nature. In other words, the Christian view is that, when "God the Father" speaks of the Messiah, and when David prophetically refers to his descendant, the Messiah, as "**my Lord**" in Psalms 110:1, it cannot refer to just an ordinary person. Rather, it can only refer to the one who fulfills this verse in both ways, as a divine being and Messiah, namely, Jesus of Nazareth.

The Christian interpretation rests on several key verses in this psalm. According to Christian sources, Psalms 110 contains at least the following

four "messianic prophecies", shown in Table III.A-1 along with their alleged respective accounts of "fulfillment" in the New Testament.[2]

Table III.A-1 – Alleged "messianic prophecies" in Psalms 110

#	Statement	Citation	
		"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"
1	The Messiah would be Lord	Psalms 110:1a	Matthew 22:41-45
2	The Messiah would be at the right hand of God	Psalms 110:1b	Mark 16:19
3	The Messiah would be a Priest in the order of Melchizedek	Psalms 110:4	Hebrews 6:17-20
4	The Messiah would be at the right hand of God	Psalms 110:5	1Peter 3:21-22

In Psalms 110:1 Jesus ("**the Lord**") is invited to sit at the right side of "God the Father" ("**the LORD**") in glory, where he will wait for "God the Father" ("**the LORD**") to judge the earth and bring everything and everyone into subjection under him ("**the Lord**"). Psalms 110:4 refers to a priest of the Most High God, Melchizedek,[3] who came to Abram,[4] and to whom Abram tithed one-tenth of all his goods. The Christian view is that, because Abram tithed to him, Melchizedek was greater than Abram, Levi's great-grandfather (Levi, the son of Jacob/Israel, is the progenitor of the Aaronic priesthood), even after his name was changed to Abraham and he entered into the Covenant of Circumcision. Therefore, the Melchizedek priesthood, having preceded the establishment of the Aaronic priesthood, is considered by Christians to be superior to it and, thus, supplants and replaces it.[5] Finally, Psalms 110:5 foretells how Jesus will be by God's right hand.

More detailed commentary may be found in the standard Christian commentaries such as, Matthew Henry and Jamieson, Fausset, & Brown.[6]

B. The Jewish Perspective

Regardless of who its author was, the overall theme of Psalms 110 is that it speaks of David's legendary power, which came through divine favor that was earned by his righteousness. The author of this psalm assures King David of victory over the enemies of his people, the Jewish people.

As is often the case, several perspectives of this psalm have been offered by the Jewish Sages. The two most common interpretations are that this psalm

[2] For example, *Jesus is the Messiah: The Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled By Jesus Christ Ordered by Category* - http://contenderministries.org/prophecy/jesusmessiah2.php
[3] This common Christian transliteration will be used throughout in reference to Christian claims.
[4] Note here that it was Abram the Gentile, not Abraham the "Hebrew", since this encounter took place before his name was changed to Abraham (in Genesis 17:5).
[5] In Judaism, and according to Torah, the royal office (which was the domain of the Tribe of Judah) and the office of the priesthood (which was the domain of the Tribe of Levi) are separate entities, so that a priest may not be a king, and vice versa. But for Christianity, this psalm celebrates the exaltation of Jesus to the throne of an eternal and increasing kingdom and a perpetual priesthood that will see the subjugation of his enemies and the multiplication of his subjects and which is rendered a certainty by the word and oath of the Almighty.
[6] These commentaries are available at - http://www.blueletterbible.org/

is about either King David or our Patriarch Abraham. Another interpretation combines these two scenarios. Still another interpretation of this psalm is messianic since David's name is associated in the Hebrew Bible with מָשִׁיחַ (***maSHI'a<u>h</u>***), the future **King/Messiah** (e.g., Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 37:24; Hosea 3:5).

The interpretation of this psalm by Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra (and adopted also by Rabbi David Qim<u>h</u>i [RaDaQ]) as being <u>about</u> King David follows the ***pSHAT***, i.e., the simple/literal reading, wherein the superscription is read as "**A Psalm for [*or*, concerning] David**". It entails David's ordeal with King Saul [a Benjaminite, יְמִינִי (***y^{e}miNI***), as also found in Esther 2:5 – a word that is identical to the Hebrew equivalent of the phrase **my right hand** (e.g., Psalms 137:5)]. According to this scenario, David is asked to wait until his enemy (Saul) is brought down.

The interpretation by RaSHI uses the apparent allusion to ***MalKI-TSEdeq*** as a way to relate this psalm to Abraham and his battle with Amraphel, and his subsequent victory over the four enemy kings (see Genesis14:12-16).

A melding of these two interpretations is possible when one reads this psalm as a prayer by an aging King David when his soldiers went to battle without him. In his prayer, King David refers to images of God's dealings with Abraham during his battle with the four kings, and he asks God to help him as He helped Abraham to prevail over his enemies.

Finally, since King David is also counted among the 55 Jewish prophets named in the Hebrew Bible, and there is use made in this psalm of verbs conjugated in the future tense, it becomes plausible that there is an allusion here to מָשִׁיחַ. As such, this psalm confirms some basic requirements מָשִׁיחַ must meet, e.g., he will be of the seed of David, victorious over all his enemies, a world leader, and a Torah scholar.

IV. WHO IS SPEAKING TO WHOM?

The Christian interpretation of Psalms 110 suffers from serious problems that are rooted in the common Christian renditions of the first verse.

A. The Superscription

Christian renditions generally do not number the superscription at the head of a psalm and, in the case of Psalms 110, the KJV deleted the superscription altogether. Yet, it is noteworthy that the Christian perspective on this psalm depends on the assumption that King David is the author and speaker. On the other hand, the various Jewish interpretations are not limited by such a restriction.

In the Hebrew text, the superscription reads לְדָוִד מִזְמוֹר (***l^edaVID mizMOR***), where לְ- (***l^e-***) is a preposition, דָוִד (***daVID***) is the name **David**, and מִזְמוֹר (***mizMOR***), as used in the Hebrew Bible, means **a psalm**. The Hebrew preposition לְ- could have any of the following meanings: **to** or **for**, **by**, and **in** or **into**. Eliminating the last pair for obvious reasons, this particular superscription could indicate this psalm as having been <u>either</u> composed **by** David <u>or</u> composed **for** or dedicated **to** David. In other words, it is not possible to determine, with absolute certainty, that King David composed this psalm.

Christian missionaries will charge that this is an after-the-fact attempt to use the ambiguity to force a biased interpretation of this psalm. This claim is effectively countered with other instances in the Book of Psalms, where the preposition לְ- in the superscription unambiguously means **for** and not **by**. One such example is Psalms 72, which was composed **by** King David **for** his son Solomon:

> **<u>Psalms 72:1,20</u> – (1) A Psalm for Solomon [לִשְׁלֹמֹה (*li'shloMOH*)]. O God, give your judgments to a king; and your righteousness to a king's son.**
> **(20) The prayers of David the son of Jesse are completed.**

In this case, the preposition לְ- changes to לִ- (***li-***) due to a rule of grammar.[7] This example puts into question the assumption on which the Christian view of Psalms 110 is based, namely, that David <u>had to be</u> its author, since it is not the only possibility here. Because Psalms 110 is not written in the 1st-person relative to David, it could have been composed by someone else, perhaps someone who served under David. It is interesting to note that, in Psalms 72, King David speaks about himself in the 3rd-person in the opening and closing verses.

In another psalm attributed to David, he speaks of himself in both the 1st-person and 3rd-person in the opening verse, and ends the psalm by speaking about himself in the 3rd-person:

> **<u>Psalms 144:1,10</u> – (1) A Psalm of David [לְדָוִד (*l^eDavid*)]. Blessed is the Lord my rock, Who trains my hands for the battle; my fingers for the war;**
> **(10) Who gives salvation to the kings; Who delivers David His servant from the evil sword.**

These examples demonstrate that, while it is plausible to consider King David as the author of Psalms 110 writing about himself in the 3rd-person or, perhaps prophetically, about מָשִׁיחַ, Psalms 110 could also be the work of a different author.

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[7] In cases where two consecutive Hebrew ***schWA*** vowel sounds would occur by prefixing a preposition, the ***schWA*** on the preposition changes to another vowel sound; in this case into a ***<u>h</u>iRIQ***, (the [Latin] "**i**" sound).

B. Who Is Speaking to Whom in Psalms 110:1?

In the two renditions of Psalms 110:1 shown below, the equivalent Hebrew terms and their respective transliterations are placed in brackets following the highlighted translated phrases.

The KJV and other Christian translations render the opening verse this way:

> **Psalms 110:1(KJV) - The LORD [יהוה (*YHVH*)] said unto my Lord [לַאדֹנִי (*ladoNI*)], Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.**

The common Jewish translation of the opening verse is:

> **Psalms 110:1 - Of David a psalm. The word of the Lord [יהוה (*YHVH*)] to my lord** (*or*, **to my master**) [לַאדֹנִי (***ladoNI***)]: **"Sit at My right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool at your feet."**

Clearly, both translations cannot be correct, and a further analysis of this verse will help determine which of these is correct.

The first Hebrew term, the Tetragrammaton, יהוה, is rendered as "**The LORD**" in the KJV, and as "**the Lord**" in the Jewish translation. Both Christian and Jewish interpretations agree on this term as representing the Creator.

The next Hebrew term, לַאדֹנִי, is rendered as "**unto my Lord**" in the KJV (note the capital "**L**"), and as "**to my lord** (*or*, **to my master**)" in the Jewish translation [note the lower-case "**l**" (*or* "**m**")]. The Hebrew word לַאדֹנִי consists of two components: the preposition לְ-, which was discussed in Section IV.A, and which can only mean **to** in this case; and אֲדֹנִי, which is the 1st-person, singular inflexion (in the possessive form) of the noun/title אָדוֹן (***aDON***). Rules of Hebrew grammar cause several changes in the noun/title אָדוֹן when it is both inflected in the possessive form and combined with the preposition לְ-.[8]

The four ways in which the 334 instances of the term אָדוֹן are applied in the Hebrew Bible are shown in Table IV.B-1.

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[8] The letter א (***Alef***) in the noun/title אָדוֹן is marked with the vowel ***qaMATS***, (ָ), thereby imparting to it the sound of [Latin] "**a**". However, when אָדוֹן is used in its possessive form, the ***qaMATS*** changes to the pseudo-vowel ***haTAF-paTAH***, (ֲ), which has the same grammatical "weight" as the ***schWA***, except that it carries the sound of [Latin] "**a**". Since having the ***schWA*** and any ***schWA***-like pseudo-vowel in succession at the beginning of a word violates the rules of Hebrew grammar, a change in vowels is required. In this particular case, the א becomes silent, and the preposition לְ- changes to לַ- (***la-***).

Table IV.B-1 – Applications of אָדוֹן in the Hebrew Bible

Term	Meaning(s)	#	Sample Citations	Remarks
אָדוֹן	a ruler, a governor, a head of state	6	Genesis 45:9; Jeremiah 34:5	---
	appellation for addressing God	26	Isaiah 1:24; Psalms 114:7	אֲדֹנִי is never used for this purpose.
אֲדוֹן	a title for a superior	202[1]	Genesis 23:6; 1Samuel 16:16	Appears only in possessive forms.
	master of …, owner of …	103[2]	Genesis 24:51; Job 3:19	Appears only in plural forms, but may be in singular context.

(1) This includes all instances of אֲדֹנִי

(2) This includes three cases from the 26 instances of an appellation for addressing God

Of the 334 cases of the term אָדוֹן in the Hebrew Bible, 195 are inflected in the 1st-person possessive form אֲדֹנִי, and these occur both with and without prefixed prepositions. This subset of 195 cases is broken out further in terms of the various forms (with and without prepositions) in Table IV.B-2.

Table IV.B-2 – Applications of אָדוֹן in the Hebrew Bible

Term	Pronunciation	#	Sample Citations	Correct Translation	KJV Rendition
אֲדֹנִי	*adoNI*	162	Genesis 24:18; Isaiah 36:9; Daniel 10:17	my lord/master	All but three have: my **lord**/master. The three exceptions have[1]: **my Lord** (Joshua 5:14; Judges 6:13; Daniel 12:8)
לַאדֹנִי	*ladoNI*	24[2]	Genesis 24:36,54,56, 32:5,6,19, 44:9,16(x2),33; 1Samuel 25:27; 2Samuel 19:29[28]; 1Kings 1:2(x2), 20:9	to/unto/for my lord/master	"… my **lord**/master"
			1Samuel 24:6*, 25:28*,30*,31(x2)*; 2Samuel 4:8*; 1Kings 18:13*; 1Chronicles 21:3*	the Lord & to/for my lord/master	"… the LORD" & "… my **lord**"
			Psalms 110:1*		The LORD & unto my **Lord**
וַאדֹנִי	*vadoNI*	6	Genesis 18:12; 2Samuel 11:11	and my lord/master	and … my **lord**; my **lord** also …
בַּאדֹנִי	*badoNI*	2	1Samuel 24:11[10]; 2Samuel 18:28	at/against my lord/master	against my **lord**
מֵאֲדֹנִי	*mei'adoNI*	1	Genesis 47:18	from my lord/master	from my **lord**

(1) These three instances of **my Lord** correspond to Joshua, Gideon, and Daniel, respectively, addressing an angel.

(2) Since the specific term of interest is לַאדֹנִי, all 24 citations are shown. Moreover, since Psalms 110:1 is one of nine verses among these 24 citation that contain both the Tetragrammaton יהוה, and the term לַאדֹנִי, all nine verses are marked with an asterisk (*).

The data in Table IV.B-2 unambiguously indicate that the KJV translators understood that the term אֲדֹנִי, with and without prepositions, means "my lord" or "my master". Specifically, as it concerns the term in Psalms 110:1, לַאדֹנִי, in 23 cases the KJV has it correctly translated as "to/unto my lord/master", yet only at Psalms 110:1 it is rendered "unto my Lord" (with the capital "L"), which imparts to it the desired Christological significance.

This manipulation by the KJV translators becomes even more evident when analyzing the nine cases where both the Tetragrammaton, יהוה, and the term לַאדֹנִי appear in the same verse. On eight occasions, the KJV has "LORD" & "lord/master", respectively, whereas in Psalms 110:1 this is cast as "LORD" & "Lord".

Sidebar note: According to both Biblical and Modern Hebrew, the terms אֲדֹנִי and יהוה are not connected or related. This is evident from the fact that the appellation אֲדֹנִי is never used to address God; it is used only when addressing a (mortal) man or an angel. On the other hand, as Table IV-B-1 shows, the term אָדוֹן is applied to both God, angels, and (mortal) men.

There is still another problem that is actually caused by the KJV translation. It was noted earlier, the first Hebrew term in Psalms 110:1, the **Tetragrammaton**, יהוה, is rendered as "**The LORD**" in the KJV, alluding to "**God the Father**" (**the Creator**), and as "**the Lord**" in the Jewish translation (this is also the case in Psalms 110:2,4), a reference to **the Creator**. It was also noted earlier that the next Hebrew term in Psalms 110:1, לַאדֹנִי, is rendered as "**unto my Lord**" in the KJV, alluding to **Jesus** ("**God the Son**"), and as "**to my lord** (*or*, **to my master**)" in the Jewish translation, a reference to **a human being**. But, the first word in Psalms 110:5, אֲדֹנָי (***AdONAI***), which is one of several common titles used in the Hebrew Bible for **the Creator**, is rendered as "**The Lord**" in the KJV, which is now "forced" to be a reference to **Jesus** ("**God the Son**") based on Psalms 110:1.

So, on the surface, this may not necessarily raise any eyebrows. However, once one checks the context of Psalms 110:1 and Psalms 110:5, the problem is obvious. Psalms 110:1 speaks of a time in the future, when the subject will be sitting to the right of **God** (**the Creator**) and waiting till his enemies are subdued (e.g., as in Psalms 27:2,6). Psalms 110:5 speaks of past situations in which **God** (**the Creator**) intervened and helped the subject defeat the enemy – God was present at this person's right side, by the hand that held the weapon, to strengthen him (e.g., as in Isaiah 41:13, Psalms 16:8, 121:5).

Going by the respective renditions in the KJV, Psalms 110:1 speaks of "**the Lord**" (**Jesus**, who is "**God the Son**"), sitting to the right of "**The LORD**" (who is "**God the Father**", [**the Creator**]), whereas Psalms 110:5 speaks of "**the Lord**" (**Jesus** ["**God the Son**"]) present at the right side of the subject being

spoken of, namely, “**the Lord**” (**Jesus** [“**God the Son**”]). In other words, in past times, “**the Lord**” was at the right hand side of “**the Lord**”, which is clearly an absurd statement!

While there is nothing in the Hebrew language of this verse to positively indicate that King David was referring to מָשִׁיחַ when he wrote אֲדֹנִי, “my lord” (*or* “my master”), in principle, there is no problem with David realizing that מָשִׁיחַ will be greater than he is. Moreover, there is nothing in David's words to indicate that the individual to whom he refers as “my lord” (or “my master”) is a divine being. If he authored this psalm, David refers to himself in the 3rd-person for someone else to chant about him. If the author was someone other than David, he is referring to King David. Nothing in the text of this psalm supports the Christian claim that אֲדֹנִי refers to Jesus.

Who is speaking to whom in Psalms 110:1? The analysis demonstrates that the Christian interpretation of “God the Father” addressing "God the Son” (Jesus) falls apart, while any of the Jewish interpretations mentioned above is plausible. It definitely cannot be Jesus relating what God said to him, yet it could be King David relating what God had promised him (in response to his pleas in Psalms 109). Or, perhaps, an anonymous author from the king's court speaking about the promises God made to his master, King David.

C. The Probable Origin of the Christian Mistranslation in Psalms 110:1

It is an interesting exercise to trace back in time this mistranslation in the KJV and other popular Christian Bibles to its possible source. The manner in which some ancient translations of the Hebrew Bible render the pair of terms אֲדֹנִי\יהוה in Psalms 110:1 provides valuable clues. Table IV.B-3 shows three such ancient translations.

<u>Table IV.B-3</u> – Ancient translations and the terms אֲדֹנִי\יהוה from Psalms 110:1

Source	Language	Terms	Transliteration	Translation (in context)
Targum Yonathan	Aramaic	(1) יְיָ\לִי	**LI\YHVH**	[Said] **the Lord** [in words] **to me**, [master over all of Israel]
Christian LXX(2)	Greek	***ο κυριος/κυριω μου***	**o kurios/kurio mou**	[Said] **The LORD** [to] **my Lord**
Jerome's Vulgate(2)	Latin	***Dominus/Domino meo***	(as shown in Latin)	[Spoke] **The LORD** [to] **my Lord**

(1) יְיָ is a common (non-sacred) notation used in place of the (sacred) יהוה
(2) In both the Christian LXX and Jerome's Latin Vulgate it is Psalms 109:1

The alleged "quotations" of Psalms 110:1 in the Greek language of the three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) all have the same usage that appears in the Christian LXX. Upon reading the relevant passages in the Gospels, the source of the problem – the erroneous translations in Christian Bibles – is discovered. <u>Two separate and distinct</u> Hebrew terms, יהוה and

אֲדֹנָי, generate the <u>same</u> Greek term, **κυριος** (***kurios***), and thereby the distinction is erased. In other words, each Gospel's rendition utilizes the <u>same Greek word</u> **κυριος** (***kurios***), **lord/master**, twice in the same verse. In the Greek text, the <u>first</u> occurrence of **κυριος** (***kurios***) [actually, **ο κυριος** (***o kurios***)], is the translation of יהוה, and the <u>second</u> **κυριος** (***kurios***) [actually, **κυριω μου** (***kurio mou***)], is the (mis)translation of לַאדֹנִי, of which אֲדֹנִי is a component. Since the Christian LXX utilizes solely the lower-case Greek alphabet, the exegetical problems to which the Gospels' Jesus refers are apparent only in the Greek rendition. Subsequently, these issues propagated into translations made from the Greek.

The confusion that resulted from this problem in the Greek text does not exist in the Hebrew text and, therefore, Jesus' discourse is only possible if he and those with whom he spoke were conversing in Greek. His exegesis in the Gospels is non-existent in the Hebrew, and it is flawed in its understanding of the Greek rendition. Christian translators have seized on this ambiguity and separated the two instances to correspond to Christian theology. The **ο κυριος** (***o kurios***) becomes “The LORD”, a reference to “God the Father”, the Creator; and the **κυριω μου** (***kurio mou***) becomes “my Lord”, a reference to “God the Son”, Jesus, the messiah of Christianity.

This analysis clearly demonstrates that the Christian rendition with its imputed Christological implications cannot be valid.

D. Can One Find the Trinity in Psalms 110:1?

Christian missionaries also claim that Psalms 110:1 supports the Doctrine of the Trinity. The salient question is: "*From a Christian perspective, does the Tetragrammaton, יהוה, rendered “The LORD” in the KJV (and in many other Christian translations), refer to “God the Father”, or to "God the Son”, or to the full Trinity?*"

To help put this claim into its proper perspective, consider the ***Sh^eMA***, often regarded as the "creed" of Judaism (the relevant highlighted Hebrew words are shown under their respective English version):

<u>Deuteronomy 6:4</u> - Hear, O Israel; the L-rd is our G-d, the L-rd is One.

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יהוה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יהוה אֶחָד׃

The Hebrew term אֱלֹהֵינוּ (***EloHEInu***), **our God**, is the 1st-person, plural inflexion of אֱלֹהִים (***EloHIM***), **God**. Christian missionaries maintain that the Hebrew term אֱלֹהִים is plural and should be understood in its literal sense as “gods”, thereby reflecting a plurality, alluding to the Trinity. Using this line of reasoning, the (translated) ***Sh^eMA*** should be interpreted as:

Hear, O Israel; the Lord is our gods, the Lord is a compound unity.

This distorted form of the ***Sh**^e^**MA*** leads to the conclusion that the expression, “the Lord” [יהוה], can refer to neither “God the Father” nor "God the Son” individually. Rather, it must refer to all three members of the Trinity at once. Therefore, this would invalidate the Christian claim that the phrase “unto my Lord” of Psalms 110:1 in the KJV refers to Jesus! If the expression “my Lord” in the KJV translation of Psalms 110:1 refers to Jesus (the second member of the Trinity), then who is “The LORD” at the beginning of Psalms 110:1? Because, if “the Lord” [יהוה] in the "modified" ***Sh**^e^**MA***, i.e., "the Lord (who is) our gods", were a Trinity united in the divine name, then “The LORD” in the KJV rendition of Psalms 110:1 would also have to refer to this Trinity. However, if this were the case, then the phrase “unto my Lord” in the KJV rendition of Psalms 110:1 would automatically exclude Jesus, who would have already been included in the first part of the verse, “The LORD”.

Another curious issue is created by the attempt to retrofit the Trinity into Psalms 110:1. If “my Lord” (allegedly Jesus) is sitting next to “The LORD”, who represents the triune godhead or any aggregate of it, then Jesus cannot be part of it, since that which exists outside of God cannot be God. And, lastly, *where is the third component of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, in all of this?*

V. WHAT WAS BEING SAID BY THE SPEAKER?

As noted in Section III.A, Psalms 110:4 is used by Christian missionaries as a "proof text" to claim that Jesus is both king (Messiah) and high priest, as Melchizedek was. This idea supplants the Aaronic priesthood with a new and superior priesthood, the priesthood according to Melchizedek. To support this claim, passages such as the following, are cited:

> **Hebrews 7:3(KJV) - Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.**

> **Hebrews 7:21(KJV) - (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)**

Has the Melchizedek Priesthood Replaced Israel's Aaronic Priesthood? In order to answer this question, it is important to note that, at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus, the material that comprises the New Testament did not exist; it was written over a period of many years, starting at least a decade after the event. The Scripture in force at that time was the Hebrew Bible. An analysis of the texts reveals that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews took editorial liberties in transforming material from the extant Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible into the message he was developing for his readers.

A term of interest is כֹּהֵן (***kOHEN***), which, in its most common usage in the Hebrew Bible, is correctly translated as **a priest**. However, the literal English

translation of כֹּהֵן as “a priest” at Psalms 110:4 is subject to challenge for several reasons. First, according to the Hebrew Bible, the plan for Israel is one that separates the functions of kingship and priesthood; an idea that is similar to the concept known today as the "separation of church and state". The selection process, qualifications, and duties of the king – the political leader – are defined in Deuteronomy 17:14-20. Commencing with King David (2Samuel 7:12-16), the requirement was that kings of the Davidic dynasty had to come from the Tribe of Judah and be biological descendants of King David through King Solomon. Deuteronomy 18:1-8, the passage that immediately follows the passage about a king of Israel, describes the other category of leadership, the Priests and Levites - the spiritual leaders – who must all come from the Tribe of Levi.

Clearly, according to the Torah, the leadership positions of king and priest are mutually exclusive. In other words, in Israel, a king cannot be a priest, and a priest cannot be a king, and this is evident from the following passage:

> **Leviticus 4:22-26 – (22) When a ruler [of Israel] sins; and, without intention, does one of the commandments of the Lord his God which may not be done, and he incurs guilt; (23) Or if he is informed of his sin that he has sinned; then he shall bring his offering, a male goat without blemish; (24) And he shall lay his hand firmly upon the head of the goat, and slaughter it in the place where he would slaughter the burnt offering before the Lord; it is a sin offering. (25) And the priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, and place [it] upon the horns of the altar [used] for burnt offerings; and [the remainder of] its blood he shall pour out onto the base of the altar [used] for burnt offerings. (26) And all its fat he shall burn upon the altar as the fat of the peace offering; and the priest shall make atonement for his [the ruler's] sin, and he will be forgiven.**

This passage, which describes the sin-offering ritual for a king, shows that the king is subservient to the priest, just as any commoner is, in the performance of this ritual. A king is barred from certain functions performed by a priest.

Second, the term כֹּהֵן [plural, כֹּהֲנִים (***kohaNIM***)], in addition to its common usage in the Hebrew Bible in identifying individuals who are **ministering as priests**, is also applicable to people who are **serving in an official [ruling] capacity**, and is occasionally used in this context in the Hebrew Bible and, as the following examples demonstrate, even correctly translated in the KJV (the relevant Hebrew terms are shown in brackets):

> **2Samuel 8:18(KJV) - And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over both the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were chief rulers [כֹּהֲנִים].**

> **2Samuel 20:26(KJV) - And Ira also the Jairite was a chief ruler [כֹּהֵן] about David.**

> **1Kings 4:5(KJV) - And Azariah the son of Nathan was over the officers: and Zabud the son of Nathan was principal officer [כֹּהֵן], and the king's friend:**

Moreover, several accounts in the Hebrew Bible record King David as having performed some functions that were typically performed by priests:

> **2Samuel 6:14,17 – (14) And David danced with all his might before the Lord; and David was girded with a linen ephod.**

> **(17) And they brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in its place, inside the tent that David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord.**

This, too, will be the case with the awaited מָשִׁיחַ during his reign:[9]

> **<u>Ezekiel 45:17</u> - And on the Prince shall be [the responsibility to bring] the burnt offerings, and meal offerings, and drink offerings, on the Festivals, and the New Moons, and the Sabbaths, on all the appointed times of the House of Israel; he shall prepare the sin offering, and the meal offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offering, to atone for the House of Israel.**

> **<u>Ezekiel 46:12</u> - And when the Prince shall prepare a free-will offering, a burnt offering or a peace offering as a free-will offering to the Lord, one shall open the gate that faces east, and he shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offering as he does on the Sabbath day; and he shall exit, and one shall close the gate after he has left.**

Neither מַלְכִּי־צֶדֶק nor King David were a part of the Aaronic priesthood, and the Hebrew Bible rules out the possibility of having a valid priestly order outside of the Aaronic priesthood. Any priesthood that predates Levi, the son of Jacob/Israel and progenitor of the priestly Tribe of Levi, remains outside the realm of Judaism, because the priesthood that emerged out of Levi has been established for eternity:

> **<u>Exodus 40:15</u> - And you shall anoint them [Aaron's sons], as you anointed their father, and they shall serve [as priests] unto Me; and their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations.**

> **<u>Numbers 25:12-13</u> – (12) Therefore say, "Behold, I give him [to Phineas] My covenant of peace; (13) And it shall be for him and for his descendants after him a covenant of an eternal priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and atoned for the Children of Israel.**

Consequently, the references in the Epistle to the Hebrews to Jesus being "**a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec**" are irrelevant to Psalms 110 in particular, and to Judaism in general.

Another term of interest is the title מַלְכִּי־צֶדֶק (***malKI-TSEdeq***), **King of Righteousness**, a title that appears twice in the Hebrew Bible – at Psalms 110:4 and at Genesis 14:18:

> **<u>Genesis 14:18</u> - And Malki-Tzedeq [מַלְכִּי־צֶדֶק], king of Shalem, brought out bread and wine; and he is a priest of the Most High God.**

The title מַלְכִּי־צֶדֶק was traditionally borne by all kings of Jerusalem, such as the righteous Gentile priest-king of Abram's time, who worshipped the "One True God", even before the city had that name and was still called by its earlier name שָׁלֵם (***ShaLEM***), which is why King David is called by it in Psalms 110:4.[10,11]

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[9] The identity of the "Prince" in the following passages is investigated in the essay, *<u>Ezekiel 40-48 - "The Prince" of Ezekiel: Who Is He?</u>* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/EzekielPrince.pdf

[10] The one who bore the title ***Malki-Tsedeq*** to whom Abram paid a tithe (Genesis14:20), was – according to Jewish tradition – Noah's son Shem, who *was* still alive and actually outlived

Using the most common interpretation, that the psalm is about King David, Psalms 110:4 confirms that David's dynasty will last forever, and that he and his successors would also perform certain priestly functions, albeit not of the same standing as Aaron and his descendants, the כֹּהֲנִים, perhaps symbolizing the ideal for a Jewish king – that he should be like a priest, drawing the Jewish people closer to God.

Finally, there is the claim by Christian missionaries that the Melchizedek priesthood is superior to the Aaronic priesthood of Israel because Melchizedek conferred a blessing on Abraham. They maintain that, through this act, Melchizedek also blessed Levi, one of Abraham's great-grandsons. A careful reading of the actual passage reveals the flaw in this notion. While it is, indeed, מַלְכִּי־צֶדֶק who was acknowledged as a priest-king of the "**… Most High God …**" (Genesis 14:18), the person who "**… gave him a tenth of all …**" (Genesis 14:22), i.e., the one who tithed him, was Abram, not Abraham. The significant point here is that the tithing took place prior to Abram's name being changed to Abraham and his formal entry into Hebrew monotheism via the Covenant of Circumcision (Genesis 17:5-14). In other words, since Abram was a Gentile at the time he received the blessing from מַלְכִּי־צֶדֶק, the claim that Melchizedek's priesthood is superior to Aaron's priesthood has no basis in the Hebrew Bible. The two priesthoods are independent priesthoods – Melchizedek's for Gentiles and Aaron's for Jewish people.

VI. SUMMARY

The analysis of Psalms 110 demonstrates that Christian missionary claims concerning this important component in their portfolio of "proof texts" are rooted in mistranslations and misinterpretations that have no valid basis within the Hebrew Bible. Moreover, since the Christian perspective is based on mistranslations and on concepts that are not part of the Hebrew Bible, it is inconsistent with any of the Jewish interpretations.

Even though several different Jewish interpretations of Psalms 110 exist, all can be validated vis-à-vis the Hebrew Bible.. On the other hand, the common Christian interpretation of this psalm, with its imputed Christology, falls apart under rigorous scrutiny. Not only can Jesus not be the one described as sitting to the right of God and qualify as the promised Jewish King/Messiah, this priesthood "**after the order of Melchisedec**", which appears to have been conferred on him by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, is a self-defeating argument, since Melchizedek was a Gentile, not a Jewish, priest.

Abram/Abraham by 35 years (as can be calculated from Genesis 11). (Gratefully acknowledged is the input on this subject by Professor Mordochai Ben-Tziyyon, formerly of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Israel.)

[11] Also present in the Hebrew Bible, at Joshua 10:1,3, is a related, but not identical, name/title, אֲדֹנִי־צֶדֶק (***adoNI-TSEdeq***), **lord/master of righteousness**, the King of Jerusalem.

Conclusion:

- **If Jesus was a Jew, then he cannot be a priest in a priestly order that is outside of Judaism, such as the Melchizedek priesthood, since the Aaronic priesthood was established exclusively and eternally for his descendants, who would all be of the Tribe of Levi, to serve on behalf of Israel.**
- **If Jesus was a Jew and, as is claimed in the New Testament, 'the son of David', he would have to be of the Tribe of Judah. Therefore he cannot be of the Tribe of Levi and serve under the eternal covenant with Aaron and his descendants.**
- **If, on the other hand, Jesus was not a Jew, then, according to Torah, he cannot rule as king of Israel.**

Case closed! 

PSALMS 2:12 - "KISS THE SON"? WHERE IS THAT SON OF A GUN?[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

Internet sources that list Christian "messianic prophecies", along with the alleged accounts of their "fulfillment" in the New Testament, contain at least seven entries for Psalms 2.[2] Among this set, Psalms 2:12 is the most prominently used so-called "proof text" in the portfolio of Christian missionaries.

Many Christian translations, the King James Version among them, employ the mistranslation **Kiss the Son** of the Hebrew opening phrase נַשְּׁקוּ־בַר (***nashQU-VAR***), the origin of which is a homiletic interpretation, not a translation, of this phrase by Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra, the noted Jewish exegete.

A rigorous analysis of the linguistic and grammatical structure of this phrase, understanding the difference between a translation and a homiletic interpretation, and placing the psalm in its proper context, will demonstrate that **Kiss the Son** is an incorrect translation of נַשְּׁקוּ־בַר, which removes the basis on which the so-called "proof text" was fashioned.

When the psalm is read in the Hebrew text, or in an correct translation thereof, with proper attention to its context, the true and entirely different perspective unfolds.

II. COMPARISON OF JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

Side-by-side renditions of key verses in Psalms 2 are displayed in Table II-1. The King James Version (KJV) renditions also show references to key passages in the New Testament, where the respective portions of this psalm are cross-referenced.

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:
- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "h̲"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

[2] Two examples of such lists are: (1) *365 Messianic prophecies that Yeshua fulfilled* - http://therefinersfire.org/messianic_prophecies.htm, and (2) *Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled by Jesus Christ* - http://www.jesus-is-lord.com/messiah.htm

[The references are found in the New American Standard Bible (NASB), but the corresponding passages, quoted below the table, are quoted from the KJV.]

<u>Table II-1</u> – Psalms 2:1-2, 6-8, 11-12 (Shown are only verses mentioned in the analysis)

vs.	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text	
	Psalms 2		תהילים ב	
1	Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?[i]	Why are nations in uproar; and [why are] kingdoms saying vain things?	לָמָּה רָגְשׁוּ גוֹיִם וּלְאֻמִּים יֶהְגּוּ־רִיק׃	א
2	The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying,[ii]	Kings of a land stand up, and nobles take counsel together against the Lord, and against His anointed [saying]:	יִתְיַצְּבוּ ׀ מַלְכֵי־אֶרֶץ וְרוֹזְנִים נוֹסְדוּ־יָחַד עַל־יהוה וְעַל־מְשִׁיחוֹ׃	ב
6	Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.	"But I have enthroned My king upon Zion, My holy mountain."	וַאֲנִי נָסַכְתִּי מַלְכִּי עַל־צִיּוֹן הַר־קָדְשִׁי׃	ו
7	I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.[iii]	I will tell of the decree; The Lord said to me, "You are My son; this day have I begotten you."	אֲסַפְּרָה אֶל חֹק יהוה אָמַר אֵלַי בְּנִי אַתָּה אֲנִי הַיּוֹם יְלִדְתִּיךָ׃	ז
8	Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.[iv]	"Ask of Me, and I shall make nations your inheritance; and the ends of the earth [I shall make] your possession."	שְׁאַל מִמֶּנִּי וְאֶתְּנָה גוֹיִם נַחֲלָתֶךָ וַאֲחֻזָּתְךָ אַפְסֵי־אָרֶץ׃	ח
11	Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.	Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.	עִבְדוּ אֶת־יהוה בְּיִרְאָה וְגִילוּ בִּרְעָדָה׃	יא
12	Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.	Do homage in purity, lest He become scornful and you perish in the way, for in a flash His anger will kindle; happy are all who take refuge in Him.	נַשְּׁקוּ־בַר פֶּן־יֶאֱנַף ׀ וְתֹאבְדוּ דֶרֶךְ כִּי־יִבְעַר כִּמְעַט אַפּוֹ אַשְׁרֵי כָּל־חוֹסֵי־בוֹ׃	יב

(i) <u>Acts 4:25(KJV)</u> – Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

(ii) <u>Acts 4:26(KJV)</u> – The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

(iii) <u>Acts 13:33(KJV)</u> - God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

<u>Hebrews 1:5(KJV)</u> - For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

<u>Hebrews 5:5(KJV)</u> - So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.

(iv) <u>Revelation 2:26(KJV)</u> – And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

Excepting two revisions from the Hebrew, one obvious and the other subtle, the two translations are reasonably consistent. The obvious revision occurs at Psalms 2:12, where the two translations disagree on the opening phrase, and where the Christian rendition imputes a heavy dose of Christology into the context of King David's words. The subtle change occurs at Psalms 2:7, where the KJV translators have replaced

the term "**s**on" with "**S**on", an action that enhances the Christological appeal of this psalm ("**S**on" is also used as part of the revision in Psalms 2:12). In addition, tenses of some verbs were changed, but these do not have a serious impact on the context.

III. OVERVIEW OF CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH INTERPRETATIONS

A. The Christian Perspective

The Christian view of this psalm is based on the claim that David and his kingdom are "types" that foreshadow Jesus and his kingdom, and that the prophecies related to the "first coming" of Jesus refer to David as his ancestor. In most Christian Bibles the opening phrase of Psalms 2:12, "Kiss the **S**on", creates a link to the declaration in Psalms 2:6-8 regarding who this "**S**on" is.

Verses 1, 2, 7, 8 are cross-referenced with passages in the New Testament as shown under Table II-1. These passages in the New Testament identify Jesus as the subject in the corresponding verses being "quoted" from Psalms 2. Curiously, the New Testament is silent on the opening phrase of Psalms 2:12. This may very well be due to the fact that, in the form it was known to the authors of the New Testament, they did not consider this part of Psalms 2:12 to have any Christological value. Yet, excepting the ancient translations, most Christian translations render the opening phrase of Psalms 2:12 as **Kiss the Son**, an overt attempt to link Jesus into this verse as well.

Standard Christian sources, such as the commentaries by Matthew Henry (MH) and Jamieson, Fausset, & Brown (JF&B), provide more detailed verse-by-verse Christian interpretations of Psalms 2 that are beyond the scope of this essay.[3]

B. The Jewish Perspective

King David, the author of Psalms 2, is saying here that, no matter how powerful the force, nothing can thwart God's will. The Jewish Sages, both ancient and modern, are split on whether the subject of this psalm is מָשִׁיחַ (***mashi'ah***), the **Messiah**, or a former king and, if a former king, they disagree on the identity of this king. The noted Jewish Sage RaSHI (Rabbi Shlomoh Ben Yitzhak [1040-1105 CE]) offers the following commentary at the beginning of the psalm:

"Our Rabbis expound it as relating to king Messiah; but according to its plain meaning it is proper to interpret it in connection with David, in the light of the statement: '*And when the Philistines heard that David was anointed king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to seek David; and David heard of it, and went down to the fortress.*' (2Samuel 5:17)."[4]

[3] MH and JF&B commentaries are available on the Internet at - http://www.blueletterbible.org/
[4] *Soncino Books of the Bible – The Psalms*, Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, Editor, p. 3, The Soncino Press (1992)

So that in its plain meaning, פְּשָׁט (***PSHAT***),[5] this psalm describes a plot against one of God's anointed kings, which could very well have been its author, King David, who even speaks in the 1st-person at one point. The following outline of the psalm helps to clarify this:

- **Verses 1-3 – Kings plan to revolt against God by attacking one of His anointed**
- **Verses 4-6 – God ridicules the plot, chastises and scares the schemers**
- **Verses 7-9 – The anointed one relates God's promise of his triumph over the schemers**
- **Verses 10-12 – The anointed one urges the schemers to accept God's ways & choices**

Although the author of the Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament attempts to link Psalms 2:1-2 to Jesus (Acts 4:25-26), other psalms indicate that King David is this anointed king:

> **Psalm 89:21-22[20-21][6] – (21) I found David My servant; I anointed him with My holy oil. (22) With whom My hand will be established; even My arm will strengthen him.**

And, as was noted by RaSHI, the Hebrew Bible records situations in which foreign kings and rulers took counsel (plotted) against King David:

> **2Samuel 5:17 - And when the Philistines heard that David was anointed king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to seek David; and David heard [of it], and David went down to the fortress.**

> **2Samuel 10:16-17 – (16) And Hadadezer sent, and brought out the Arameans that were from beyond the River; and they came to Helam, and Shobach the captain of the host of Hadadezer, before them. (17) And it was told to David; and he gathered together all Israel, and he crossed the Jordan, and came to Helam. And the Arameans set themselves against David, and fought with him.**

None of these situations apply to Jesus since no accounts are recorded in the New Testament in which the leaders of the surrounding Gentile nations had hatched a plot against him, and for which Jesus waged war against them and militarily defeated them.

It is also evident that David was speaking about himself in this psalm:

> **Psalms 2:7 – I will tell of the decree; The Lord said to me, "You are My son [בְּנִי (*BNI*)]; this day have I begotten you."**

The New Testament "quotes" this verse as if God were speaking to Jesus (Acts 13:33), which is the likely motivation for the KJV translators to have changed "**s**on" to "**S**on" at this verse. King David is the "**s**on" here, a figurative characterization similar to the way God referred to Solomon as His "**s**on" in His

[5] The methodology of Jewish biblical interpretation consists of four levels: **plain** (פְּשָׁט - ***PSHAT***), **symbolic** (רֶמֶז - ***REMEZ***), **homiletic** (דְּרוּשׁ - ***DRUSH***; also דְּרָשׁ - ***DRASH***), and **mystical** (סוֹד - ***SOD***). These four levels are commonly referred to by their Hebrew acronym פרד"ס (pronounced as ***parDES***). It should be noted for future reference that, according to the Jewish rules of biblical exegesis, only the ***PSHAT***, i.e., the plain meaning of the text, can serve as the basis for prophecy.
[6] Verse numbers shown in square brackets, e.g., [20-21], are those used in Christian bibles.

promise to David concerning the establishment of his everlasting dynasty (2Samuel 7:12-16):

> **2Samuel 7:14 - I will be to him a father, and he shall be to Me a son; so that when he goes astray I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with afflictions of human beings.**

And this figurative language is found elsewhere in the Book of Psalms:

> **Psalms 89:20-21,27-28[19-20,26-27] – (20) Then You spoke in a vision to Your pious ones, and said, "I placed help upon a hero; I have raised a chosen one from the people. (21) I found David My servant; I anointed him with My holy oil."**
> **(27) "He will call to Me, 'You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.'**
> **(28) Also I will make him a firstborn, highest of the kings of the earth."**

Verse 8 further indicates that David spoke about what God had promised him:

> **Psalms 2:8 – "Ask of Me, and I shall make nations your inheritance; and the ends of the earth [I shall make] your possession."**

The Hebrew Bible records that, after many wars, this promise to King David was indeed fulfilled:

> **2Samuel 7:1,9 – (1) And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around.**
> **(9) And I was with you wherever you went, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I have made for you a great name, like the name of the great ones who are on the earth.**

> **1Chronicles 14:17 - And the fame of David went forth throughout all the lands; and the Lord placed the fear of him upon all the nations.**

Lastly, there is verse 12 which, as noted in the Introduction, is the focus of this article (more on it in the sections that follow):

> **Psalm 2:12 - Do homage in purity [נַשְּׁקוּ־בַר], lest He become scornful and you perish in the way, for in a flash His anger will kindle; happy are all who take refuge in Him.**

The outline of the psalm indicates this verse is a continuation of the theme King David started in verse 11 where, in addressing the (Gentile) kings and judges of the earth, he exhorts them to follow the righteous path and rejoice, rather than continue to be wicked and suffer the consequences for it.

An alternate interpretation offered by some Jewish Sages has this verse pointing back to verse 7, where the "**s**on" mentioned in it is a reference to King David, and its message is that acknowledging with sincerity of heart that King David is God's anointed avoids incurring His wrath.

The Jewish messianic interpretation of Psalms 2 parallels the alternate interpretation, since David's name is used in the Hebrew Bible as a metaphoric reference to מָשִׁיחַ (e.g., Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 34:23-24, 37:24-25; Hosea 3:5).

IV. A Linguistic Analysis of the Opening Phrase in Psalms 2:12

The phrase in question, נַשְּׁקוּ־בַר, consists of two components, נַשְּׁקוּ (***nashQU***) – a verb, and בַר (***VAR***) – a noun. The verb נַשְּׁקוּ is conjugated in the 2nd-person, plural, imperative, in the *pi'EL* stem (the active intensive verb form in Hebrew grammar) of the root verb נשק (***NUN-SHIN-QOF***), which appears on 35 occasions in the Hebrew Bible in different conjugations with several meanings, depending on the particular verb stem and the context within the respective passage. The most common contextual application of this verb is **[to] kiss** (e.g., Genesis 27:27), from which the noun נְשִׁיקָה (***neshiQAH***), **a kiss**, is derived (e.g., it appears in the plural form at Song of Songs 1:2). The other applications are: **[to] unite** (e.g., Psalms 85:11[10]; correctly translated in the KJV!), and **to knock against** or **to touch** (e.g., Ezekiel 3:13; correctly translated in the KJV!). In some cases, this verb is applied in the context of **[to] arm oneself with a weapon** (e.g., Psalms 78:9; correctly translated in the KJV!), from this context the noun נֶשֶׁק (***NEsheq***), **arms/weapons**, is derived (e.g., as at Job 39:21). The rendition of the term נַשְּׁקוּ at Psalms 2:12 as the 2nd-person, plural, imperative, **kiss**, in the KJV, and in most other Christian translations, becomes problematic when combined with the way in which the next term is translated in these Bibles.

The noun בַּר (***BAR***) is rendered here as בַר for grammatical reasons.[7] The Hebrew word בַּר [also בָּר] occurs in the Hebrew Bible 22 times with two distinct meanings. Its most common application is as the noun **grain** (15x; e.g., Genesis 41:35,49); the other application is as the adjective **pure** or **clean** or **choice** [as in select, superior, top quality] (7x; e.g., Job 11:4).

The correct translation of בַר at Psalms 2:12 is **pure** or **clean**, or **purity** or **cleanliness**, and it is even possible that King David used it here as a metaphor for the Torah (see the *Targum Yonatan* rendition below). The KJV and most other Christian translations render this as **the Son**, claiming that בַר, as an alternate form of בַּר, is the Aramaic word for **son**. However, this claim is invalidated by at least the following linguistic issues:

- **No Aramaic words are used in the Book of Psalms. The Aramaic language was not the spoken vernacular until the time of the Babylonian exile, i.e., in the sixth century BCE, long after the Psalms were composed and recorded by King David and others.**
- **The Aramaic term בַּר is used in some of the Aramaic portions in the Hebrew Bible (but not in the Book of Psalms). However it is not the term for 'son', but for the possessive form, 'son of …', where the rest of this expression must be provided in the phrase itself. For example, in the Aramaic portion of the Book of Daniel appears the expression כְּבַר אֱנָשׁ** (***keVAR eNASH***), **'like a son of man' (**Daniel 7:13**). In the very next chapter, after the language**

[7] The grammatical rule states that, when the letter בּ (***BET***) follows an open syllable, i.e., one that ends with a vowel, then the בּ is replaced by the letter ב (***VET***), the same letter, but without the accent mark in it. [This is also the case with several other letters of the Hebrew alphabet.]

switches back to the Hebrew, appears the Hebrew equivalent [without the preposition כְּ־ (*k*^{e}-), like], בֶּן־אָדָם (*BEN-ADAM*), ‘son of man’. The Aramaic noun for son used in the Hebrew Bible is בְּרָא (*bRA*), not בַּר. The Hebrew term for ‘son’, בֵּן (*BEN*), is used by King David in Psalms 2:7 in the inflected form בְּנִי, ‘my son’. Had he used the equivalent Aramaic word in Psalms 2:7, it would have been בְּרִי (*bRI*).

- **Even if בַּר in Psalms 2:12 were Aramaic, and even if it meant ‘son’ (neither of which is the case here), the definite article הַ־ (*ha*-), ‘the’, is missing from the phrase נַשְּׁקוּ־בַר, and the proper translation would then be ‘Kiss a son’, not ‘Kiss the son’.**

A word study on the Hebrew (not Aramaic!) term בַּר illustrates the problem with the KJV rendition. There are two instances of וּבַר (***u'VAR***), where the term is prefixed by the conjunction וּ־ (***u***-), **and** [a variant of the conjunction וְ־ (***v***^{e}-)].[8] The analysis is shown in Table IV-1, where the item of interest is located at the top of the list.

Table IV-1 – The Hebrew word בָּר\בַּר in the Hebrew Bible and its renditions in the KJV

Term	#	Pronunciation	Reference	Correct Translation	KJV Rendition
בַר	**1**	***VAR***	**Psalms 2:12**	**purity**	**the Son**
בַּר	3	*BAR*	Amos 5:11	grain	wheat
			Amos 8:6	grain	the wheat
			Psalms 72:16	grain	corn
בָּר	9	*BAR*	Genesis 41:35	grain	corn
			Genesis 41:49	grain	corn
			Genesis 42:3	grain	corn
			Genesis 42:25	grain	corn
			Genesis 45:23	grain	corn
			Joel 2:24	grain	wheat
			Amos 8:5	grain	wheat
			Psalms 65:14[13]	grain	corn
			Proverbs 11:26	grain	corn
בָּר	1	*BAR*	Proverbs 14:4	clean [empty]	clean
בָּרָה	3	*baRAH*	Psalms 19:9	pure	pure
			Song of Songs 6:9	the choice one	the choice one
			Song of Songs 6:10	clear	clear
הַבָּר	1	*haBAR*	Jeremiah 23:28	the wheat	the wheat
בַּבָּר	1	*baBAR*	Job 39:4	on the grain	with corn
וּבַר	2	*uVAR*	Psalms 24:4	and a pure [heart]	and a pure [heart]
			Job 11:4	and [I was] clean	and [I am] clean
לְבָרֵי	1	*l*^{e}*vaREI*	Psalms 73:1	to the pure [of heart]	to [such as are of] a clean [heart]

Is it not odd that the KJV translators captured the proper context in 21 of the 22 cases, and only at Psalms 2:12 their rendition deviated from the correct meaning?

[8] The change is due to a grammatical rule which states that, when a letter בּ follows the conjunction וְ־, then וְ־ changes to וּ־, and בּ changes to ב. This same rule also applies to the letters כּ and פּ, which then change to the letters כ and פ, respectively, which changes their sound from ‘hard” to “soft”.

A variant of בָּר, namely, בֹּר (*BOR*), **purity** or **cleanliness**, is also used in the Hebrew Bible, where it appears on seven occasions, as shown in Table IV-2.

Table IV-2 – The Hebrew word בֹּר in the Hebrew Bible and its renditions in the KJV

Term	#	Pronunciation	Reference	Correct Translation	KJV Rendition
בְּבֹר	2	*b^eVOR*	Job 9:30	with purity	so clean
			Job 22:30	because of the purity of [your hands]	by the pureness of [thine hands]
כְּבֹר	3	*k^eVOR*	2 Samuel 22:21	according to the cleanness of [my hands]	according to the cleanness of [my hands]
			Psalms 18:21[20]		
			Psalms 18:25[24]		
כְּבֹרִי	1	*k^eVORI*	2 Sam 22:25	according to my cleanness	according to my cleanness
כַּבֹּר	1	*kaBOR*	Isaiah 1:25	as with soap	purely [purge]

It is evident from Table IV-2 that the KJV translators were able to recognize this variant and translate it properly in each of the seven instances.

The question that begs for an answer is, "*Is it just by coincidence that the only significant mistranslation by the KJV of בָּר occurs in a passage with imputed Christological relevance?*" The data presented in Tables IV-1&2 provide the answer to this question.

V. From Where Came "Kiss the Son"?

It is interesting to research the possible sources for the common Christian translation of the opening passage in Psalms 2:12, נַשְּׁקוּ־בַר, as **Kiss the Son**.

Several are clues available that help in this effort. One clue was already mentioned before – none of the authors of the New Testament ever point to or invoke this opening phrase at Psalms 2:12. As stated above, this indicates that it had no particular Christological appeal in the form this verse was known to them.

The following marginal note from the R.V. (the 1881 Revised Version [of the 1611 KJV Bible]), which uses the translation **Kiss the Son**, is quoted by one source:

Some ancient versions render, "lay hold of (or, receive) instruction," others "worship in purity."[9]

The results of a search for additional clues in several available ancient Biblical texts are summarized below, listed in ascending chronological order of the source:

✡ The ***Targum Yonatan***, an ancient interpretive translation into the Aramaic vernacular of the Hebrew Bible, has קַבִּילוּ אוּלְפָּנָא (***qaBılu ulfaNA***), **accept the Law**.

✞ The ***Greek LXX***, an ancient Christian translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, has δραξασθε παιδειας (*draxasthe paideias*), which breaks down as follows: δραξασθε (*draxasthe*), **grasp**

[9] Soncino Books of the Bible – The Psalms, Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, Editor, p. 5, The Soncino Press (1992)

(in the 2nd-person, plural, imperative); παιδειας (*paideias*), **instructions**. Thus, the ***Greek LXX*** has **Grasp instructions**.

- ✞ ***Jerome's Latin Vulgate*** (405 CE) has ***adorate pure***. ***adorate*** is the 2nd-person, plural, imperative of ***adoro***, **[to] call upon**, or **[to] entreat**, or **[to] worship**; ***purus*** is the root verb **[to] be clean**/**pure**, from which comes the Latin term ***pure***, meaning **purity**. Therefore, this translates as **Worship in purity**.
  - o The ***1582 Rheims*** translation of ***Jerome's Latin Vulgate*** renders ***adorate pure*** as **Embrace discipline**.
  - o In 1907, Pope Pius X ordered a revision of ***Jerome's Latin Vulgate***, and the new version has ***Apprehendite disciplinam***, which translates as **Embrace discipline**.
- ✞ ***Martin Luther's 1545 German translation*** has ***Küsset den Sohn***, which translates as **Kiss the Son**.
- ✞ The ***1611 KJV*** [The ***Authorized Version*** (A. V.)] has **Kiss the Son**.

The above information indicates that the revision took place somewhere between the fifth and 16th centuries CE. It should be noted that this revision of the Hebrew text has not been universally accepted by all Christian translations, old and new.

Curiously, the likely source for this mistranslation may come as a surprise to many: the two great Jewish Sages, Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra [1089-1164 CE], the Jewish-Spanish Bible exegete and philosopher, and Rabbi David Qimhi [1160-1235 CE], the Jewish-French/Spanish Bible exegete and grammarian. Rabbi Ibn Ezra offered the interpretation **Kiss the son** by linking the phrase נַשְּׁקוּ־בַר to the anointed individual referred to as **My son** in Psalms 2:7, and he suggested that it is a reference to מָשִׁיחַ. Rabbi David Qimhi accepted Ibn Ezra's interpretation. They explain that the anointed one, who will be **pure**, i.e., he will be righteous by keeping Torah, is מָשִׁיחַ and, therefore, people should pay homage to him. In the Hebrew Bible, a way of paying homage is at times expressed through the act of kissing someone or something:

> **1Samuel 10:1 - And Samuel took the vial of oil, and poured it on his [Saul's] head, and kissed him. And he [Samuel] said [to Saul], "Indeed, the Lord has anointed you to be a ruler over His inheritance."**

This interpretation caught the attention of the Church, which seized upon it and applied it as referring to Jesus, the Messiah of Christianity. Rabbi David Qimhi, aware of this misapplication, issued a detailed refutation to this Christological retrofit of his and Rabbi Ibn Ezra's interpretation of this phrase.[10] The fact that most Christian Bibles have retained **Kiss the Son** indicates that it is widely accepted as the proper translation, since it serves to enhance the Christological relevance of the entire Psalm. However, the Christian adaptation of Ibn Ezra's interpretation of the phrase as its legitimate translation is flawed, as explained in the following important points:

- **The phrase נַשְּׁקוּ־בַר is an interpretation, not a literal translation and, therefore, it should not be considered as the *pshat*, i.e., the plain meaning of the text**

[10] See the Appendix (Section IX) for a reproduction of this refutation.

- **The fact that both Rabbi Ibn Ezra, who interpreted the phrase as Kiss the son, and Rabbi Qimhi, who accepted this interpretation, relate it to v. 7 and give it messianic significance is a confirmation that it is not the *pshat*, because the plain reading and context of this psalm is not messianic, as was noted in Section III.B above**

VI. AN EXCURSION INTO THE ARAMAIC DOMAIN

As was noted in Section IV, the common Aramaic noun for **son** is בְּרָא, not בַּר. Several applications of the Aramaic term בַּר are present throughout the Aramaic portions of the Hebrew Bible, and these are shown in Table VI-1.

Table VI-1 – The Aramaic word בַּר in the Hebrew Bible and its renditions in the KJV

Term	#	Pronunciation	Root	Reference	Correct Translation	KJV Rendition
בַּר	1	*VAR*	בְּרָא	Ezra 5:1	[the] son of [Iddo]	[the] son of [Iddo]
בַּר	3	*BAR*	בְּרָא	Ezra 5:2	[the] son of [Shealtiel]	[the] son of [Shealtiel]
				Ezra 5:2	[the] son of [Yehozadaq]	[the] son of [Jozadak]]
				Ezra 6:14	[the] son of [Iddo]	[the] son of [Iddo]
כְּבַר	2	*k*[e]*VAR*	בְּרָא	Daniel 6:1[5:31]	at the age of [sixty two years]	being about [threescore and two years] old
				Daniel 7:13	like a son of [man]	like the **Son** of [man]
לְבַר	1	*l*[e]*VAR*	בְּרָא	Daniel 3:25	Literal: like a son of ["God"]. In context: like an angel*	the **Son** of [God]
בְּרֵהּ	1	*bREH*	בְּרָא	Daniel 5:22	son of his, i.e., his son	his son

* The fact this was an angel is confirmed just three verses later:

> Daniel 3:28 - Nebuchadnezzar cried out and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, **Who sent His ANGEL** and rescued His servants, who trusted Him; and [who] deviated from the command of the king, and risked their lives in order not to worship or prostrate themselves to any god except to their God.

Even the KJV confirms this with a reasonably accurate translation:

> Daniel 3:28(KJV) - Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, **who hath sent his ANGEL,** and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

As is evident from Table VI-1, all (undisputed) applications of the Aramaic noun בַּר in the Hebrew Bible show that the term is used in the possessive construct, **son of…**, not as a free standing noun combined with the definite article, **the son**.

VII. AN EXCURSION INTO THE BOOK OF PROVERBS: THE CASE OF בַּר IN PROVERBS 31:2

Christian missionaries point to the use of the word בַּר in Proverbs 31:2 as they attempt to support their claim that the expression נַשְּׁקוּ־בַר uses the term בַּר in the context of **son**. The term בַּר occurs three times in Proverbs 31:2, but these were not included in either Table IV-1 or Table VI-1 due to the fact that their classification, as Hebrew or Aramaic terms, is ambiguous. An analysis of these three instances of בַּר in Proverbs 31:2 is presented below to help determine their proper context and whatever relationship may exist, if any, with the usage of בַּר in Psalms 2:12.

Table VII-1 provides the Hebrew text of Proverbs 31:2, as well as side-by-side translations – the KJV rendition is on the left side, a common Jewish translation is on the right side, and an alternate Jewish translation is in the middle.

Table VII-1 – The instances of בַּר in Proverbs 31:2

King James Version Translation	Alternate Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Common Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	Hebrew Text
Proverbs 31:2			משלי לא,ב
What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows?	What, my choice one, and what, [O] choice one of my womb; and what, [O] choice one of my vows?	What, my son, and what, son of my womb; and what, son of my vows?	מַה־בְּרִי וּמַה־בַּר־בִּטְנִי וּמֶה בַּר־נְדָרָי׃

The three instances of בַּר are highlighted in the Hebrew and in the respective English translations of the verse. The first instance is the term בְּרִי (***b**RI*), rendered "**my son**" both in the KJV and in the common Jewish translation, and "**my choice one**" in the alternate Jewish translation. The remaining two instances are identical and are simply the term בַּר, rendered "**the son of ...**" in the KJV, "**son of ...**" in the common Jewish translation, and "**[O] choice one of ...**" in the alternate Jewish translation. It is noteworthy that, regardless of the differences in the respective renditions of בַּר, all three applications agree that it is a possessive construct of the noun. This fact alone is sufficient to invalidate the basis for comparing its use here with the use of the term בר in Psalms 2:12 by Christian missionaries.

The applications of בַּר in Proverbs 31:2 may be understood in two distinct ways, either of which leads to a correct interpretation of the verse:

- ✡ **It may be the Aramaic term for 'son of ...', which was introduced into the original text at some later time**
- ✡ **It may be the Hebrew term described above as 'pure', or 'clean', or 'choice' [as in select, superior, top quality], and cast in a possessive construct**

These two approaches are explained and evaluated below.

A. The Case for the Aramaic בְּרָא

*Why is it plausible that בַּר in Proverbs 31:2 is the Aramaic possessive construct **son of ...** from the root noun בְּרָא, **son**?*

According to Jewish tradition, and this is also accepted among Christians, King Solomon authored the following: **Proverbs** [מִשְׁלֵי (***mish**LEI*)], **Song of Songs** [שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים (*SHIR **ha'shi**RIM*)], and **Ecclesiastes** [קֹהֶלֶת (***qo**HElet*)]. The Hebrew Bible records the following regarding King Solomon's works:

> **1Kings 5:12 - And he [Solomon] spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five.**

> **1Kings 11:41 - And the rest of the acts of Solomon and all that he did and his wisdom, they are assuredly written in the Book of the Acts of Solomon.**

Though the **Book of the Acts of Solomon** appears to have been lost and is unknown to us today, the Hebrew Bible and Christian Bibles contains the above-mentioned three works of Solomon, and these may very well represent the surviving remnants of it. However, when the data provided in 1Kings 5:12 is contrasted with the actual contents of these works – **Proverbs** (915 verses/31 chapters), **Song of Songs** (117 verses/8 chapters), and **Ecclesiastes** (222 verses/12 chapters) – the numbers fall significantly short of those reported in 1Kings 5:12.

What happened to the rest of King Solomon's writings? There are different speculations about what the answer to this question might be. Among these, perhaps the most plausible paradigm is that the three Books being attributed to King Solomon – **Proverbs**, **Song of Songs**, and **Ecclesiastes** – are, in fact, versions of his complete original works, which were edited or redacted by others at a later time.

The Hebrew Bible offers clues that lend support to this theory. One such clue is provided in the opening verse of Proverbs 25:

> **Proverbs 25:1 – These too are proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, maintained.**

Why would it be necessary to make this statement in the first place? Perhaps its purpose was to serve as a disclaimer, to indicate this is not King Solomon's original work but, rather, maintained by others who may have done some editing. King Hezekiah had his scribes create and maintain copies of the proverbs of Solomon for distribution throughout the Kingdom of Judah. It is well documented in the Hebrew Bible that, already at the time of Hezekiah's reign as King of Judah [ca. 728-699 BCE], the officials of his court spoke the Aramaic language, although it was not yet the vernacular among the population:

> **2Kings 18:26 - And Eliakim the son of Hilkiah and Shebnah and Joah said to Rabshakeh, "Please speak to your servants in Aramaic for we understand it; do not speak with us in Judean within the hearing of the people who are on the wall." [See also Isaiah 36:11.]**

The official positions each of the above-named individuals held are identified in another passage:

> **2Kings 18:18 - And they summoned the king, and Eliakim the son of Hilkiah who was appointed over the palace, and Shebna the scribe and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder, came out to them. [See also Isaiah 36:3.]**

It is quite plausible that, while maintaining and transcribing the proverbs, some editing and redacting took place, which could have easily included the introduction of the Aramaic term בַּר in Proverbs 31:2. From a strictly poetic stylistic perspective, albeit subjective, replacing the Hebrew בְּנִי and בֵּן with the

Aramaic בְּרִי and בַּר, respectively, makes the verse flow better. So, while the original material is credited to King Solomon, the recorded material may be the product of King Hezekiah's scribes and perhaps others.

There is still stronger evidence in the Hebrew Bible that supports this theory. If King Solomon's writings were edited during a later era, as exemplified by **Proverbs**, then this should also be reflected in his other two extant works, **Song of Songs** and **Ecclesiastes**. *Is this the case?* Yes, indeed it is!

Various linguistic indicators attest to the fact that elements of the language used in the Hebrew text of King Solomon's writings are of a vintage that is later than his own era. When those who are proficient and knowledgeable in the Hebrew language read through the Hebrew **Song of Songs** and **Ecclesiastes**, they will encounter words that are not native to Hebrew, but which are rooted in languages of some Near-Eastern nations of later times, among which were the Aramaic and Persian languages. One such example, the word פַּרְדֵּס (***parDES***), **an orchard**, is of Persian origin, and it appears in both **Song of Songs** (4:13) and **Ecclesiastes** (2:5; here in the plural form, פַּרְדֵּסִים [***pardesIM***]). This particular term has a somewhat familiar "ring" to it; its Greek form, παραδεισος (*paradeisos*), is the origin of the English word **paradise**. The only other occurrence of this word in the Hebrew Bible is at Nehemiah 2:8 (a product of the fifth century BCE).

Another example is found in the **Song of Songs**, which contains the only three instances in the Hebrew Bible of the word סְמָדַר (***smaDAR***), an Aramaic word of undetermined origin that means **early fruit** (of a vine or berry still in its budding stage; 2:13,15, 7:13).

A final example is the word פִּתְגָם (***pitGAM***), an Aramaic word of Persian origin that means **judgment**, **sentence**, or **order**, with one of its eight instances found in **Ecclesiastes** (8:11). The other seven cases of this word are at Esther 1:20 (which is in the Hebrew portion of the Hebrew Bible), Daniel 3:16, 4:14, Ezra 4:17, 5:7,11, 6:11 (which are all in Aramaic segments of the Hebrew Bible).

B. The Case for the Hebrew בָּר

Some people will not accept, for one reason or another, the case presented above for the Aramaic בַּר. So here is another plausible explanation of the applications of בַּר in Proverbs 31:2, in which the Hebrew word, as described in Section IV, is shown to be utilized in the possessive constructs as "**choice one of …**" from the root noun בָּר.

The alternate Jewish translation has the first two verses in Proverbs 31 as:

<u>Proverbs 31:1-2</u> – (1) The words of Lemuel the king; a prophecy with which his mother chastised him; (2) What, my choice one [בְּרִי], and what, [O] choice one of [בַּר] my womb; and what, [O] choice one of [בַּר] my vows?

The inflected noun בַּר in the 1st-person, singular, masculine or feminine gender is בְּרִי, **my choice one**, or **my pure one**, puts the noun into its possessive form. In the remaining two cases, the second noun in the phrase is inflected in the 1st-person, which leaves the noun בַּר unchanged, except for a vowel change from a *qa**MATS*** under the letter ב (בָּר) to a *pa**TA<u>H</u>*** under it (בַּר), which is due to the change from a standalone noun to its possessive form in the respective phrases.

Considering the alternate translation, can this reading of Proverbs 31:2 be explained? Possible later redacting notwithstanding, according to Jewish tradition, this Proverb is attributed to King Solomon. And, although the actual identity of King Lemuel is not crucial for the explanation of this verse, several Jewish Sages have proposed that it is yet another pseudonym for King Solomon. King Lemuel's mother, as she starts to give her son advice about ruling with dignity and justice, refers to him as **my choice one**. Based on the opening verse and the three characterizations found in the second verse, it appears that he was the most favored of her sons:[11]

- **She devoted most of her instruction and education to him**
- **He was born with unusual natural talents, the most gifted of her sons**
- **She made great vows and offered up devout prayers to God, even before he was ever conceived, in her hopes for him**

A similar use of the noun בָּר in the context of **the choice one** is found here:

<u>Song of Songs 6:9</u> – My dove, my perfect one, is but one [of a kind]; she is one [of a kind] to her mother, the choice one [בָּרָה] she is to the one who bore her; women saw her and acclaimed her, queens and concubines [saw her] and praised her;

The KJV agrees, as do many other Christian translations:

<u>Song of Songs 6:9(KJV)</u> - My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her. The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.

Consequently, the Hebrew term בָּר could easily apply in this same context at Proverbs 31:2.

It is not important which of the above two interpretations one accepts, and they are not mutually exclusive, which means that both may be valid explanations. The analysis presented here demonstrates the importance of an intimate and thorough knowledge of the Hebrew language as one of the tools for learning and understanding what the Hebrew Bible teaches.

[11] David had four sons with Bathsheba, Solomon's mother (1Chronicles 3:5).

Sidebar note: In Judaism, the phrase 'son of God' never takes on the Greek mythological meaning that the New Testament ascribes to it – a divine being that is a literal son of God – a concept that would never occur to a Jew. Greek gods have literal sons, but the One God of Israel does not (Rabbi David Qimhi's refutation of the Christian revision in Psalms 2:12 addresses this issue). To a Jewish person, the title 'son of God' may have either of the following two meanings:

- **A king from the line of David and Solomon (e.g., 2Samuel 7:14, Psalms 89:28[27])**
- **Any one of us, as we are all metaphoric children of God, the Children of Israel in particular (e.g., Exodus 4:22, Jeremiah 31:8[9], Hosea 11:1)**

Therefore, the only time the noun 'son' occurs in Psalms 2, which is the Hebrew word בְּנִי, 'my son', at Psalms 2:7, it refers to one of God's anointed Jewish kings (likely to be King David).

VIII. SUMMARY

The goal of this study was to show that the claim by Christian missionaries about Psalms 2:12 is based on an incorrect translation of the opening phrase in the verse, נַשְּׁקוּ־בַר, and the false claim that it contains the Aramaic word for **son**. The analysis proved that the term בַּר\בָּר, as used in the Hebrew Bible, does not mean **son**, neither in Hebrew nor in Aramaic. The reasons that the rendition of this phrase as **Kiss the Son** is an incorrect "modern" revision in many Christian Bibles are:

- It is based on a homiletic interpretation, not a translation, of the Hebrew phrase
    - **The fact that Rabbi Ibn Ezra suggests the phrase נַשְּׁקוּ־בַר is a reference to the Messiah by relating it to the Hebrew inflected noun בְּנִי, 'my son', indicates that this is *drash*, i.e., a homiletic interpretation, not *pshat*, i.e., its plain meaning**
    - **Rabbi Qimhi, who accepted Rabbi Ibn Ezra's interpretation, took note of how the Church seized upon this *drash* and used it as if it were the *pshat* in order to claim it as a prophecy about the Christian Messiah, and wrote a powerful refutation to this claim by the Church**
- It is a grammatically incorrect translation of the Hebrew phrase
    - **The phrase נַשְּׁקוּ־בַר does not contain the definite article הַ־ and, therefore, if בַר were the Aramaic noun for 'son', then the phrase would have had to be translated as 'Kiss a son', not 'Kiss the son'**
    - **All the Aramaic nouns for 'son', as used in the Aramaic portions of the Hebrew Bible, are rooted in the Aramaic noun בְּרָא, not בָּר**
    - **If בַר in Psalms 2:12 were an Aramaic word, then, as used in the Aramaic portions of the Hebrew Bible, it is the possessive form 'son of …' (where the rest of this expression must be provided in the phrase itself), not the term for 'son'**
- There are no Aramaic words in the Book of Psalms
    - **Both Jews and Christians generally agree that 19,478 of the 19,479 words in the Masoretic Text of the Book of Psalms are Hebrew words. Does it make any sense to say that בָּר is the lone Aramaic word therein?**

- There was no logical reason for King David, the author of this psalm, to have used an Aramaic word in Psalms 2:12, or elsewhere in his works
    - **He lived several centuries before the Babylonian exile, in which the Jews began to formally use Aramaic as the vernacular**
    - **He used an inflected form of the Hebrew noun בֵּן, son, in the same psalm**
    - **He never used Aramaic words in any of his other psalms**
- The authors of the New Testament did not find any Christological significance in this phrase
    - **There are no references or pointers to it in the New Testament**
    - **Ancient translations of the Hebrew Bible, by Christians and Jews, which post-date the canonization of the New Testament, have correct translations of the phrase**

<u>Conclusion</u>: The translation of the Hebrew phrase נַשְּׁקוּ־בַר as 'Kiss the Son' is not only incorrect, it is a later product of Christian translators. Therefore, the Christian perspective on Psalms 2:12 is invalid.

IX. SUPPLEMENTARY SECTION

Reproduced here, with permission from the publishers, is the response by Rabbi David Qim<u>h</u>i (referred to as *Redak* in the source – a transliteration of the Hebrew acronym for his name) to the Christian claims concerning his and Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra's interpretation of נַשְּׁקוּ־בַר as **Kiss the son**.

Before getting to the response by *Redak*, two brief notes are in order. The first is about Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai (*Chida* – this, too, is a transliteration of the Hebrew acronym for his name), who is credited with the discovery of this material. *Chida* [1724-1806 CE] was born in Jerusalem and became a well-known Jewish scholar who wrote several classic works in Halachah (Jewish Law). He is regarded as one of the most fascinating and multi-faceted figures in Jewish history. He traveled extensively, and wherever he visited, *Chida* made sure to inspect the important libraries. He thereby became familiar with many thousands of manuscripts, and a portion from one of these is the text being reproduced below. Out of these visits grew his remarkably compact and informative classic bibliographic and biographic work, *<u>Shem HaGedolim</u>*. During his lifetime, *Chida* produced some one hundred volumes in every field of scholarship. [This is an edited and condensed version of the biographical sketch found on the Orthodox Union (OU) website, under the title, "Great Leaders of our People"].

The second note concerns the translation of the Hebrew phrase נַשְּׁקוּ־בַר, shown below as **Arm yourselves with purity**. This is the rendition in the Judaica Press publication.[12] It is one of several acceptable translations of the phrase.

[12] *<u>PSALMS, Volume One – A New English Translation</u>*, Rabbi A. J. Rosenberg, p. 9, The Judaica Press (1991).

APPENDIX: REDAK[13]

R' Chaim Joseph David Azulai, known by the acronym *Chida*, writes in the diary of his travels that when he was in Paris, he visited a library of manuscripts, where he saw "many hundreds of our books in manuscript, and there was a *Redak* on Psalms, in which there was more than [in] the printed edition, and we saw on the verse (2:12) a column larger than half a folio."

2:12 – **Arm yourselves with purity** – Heb. נְשְׁקוּ־בַר [sic;[14] actual is נַשְּׁקוּ־בַר]. The Christians [rendering: Kiss the son] explain this as referring to Jesus, but the verse they bring as evidence and which they make a support to their error is itself their stumbling block. This is (verse 1[sic; a misprint that should be verse 7]): "The Lord said to me, 'You are my son.'" If they tell you that he was God's son, tell them that we cannot say that a human being is God's son, because the son is of the species of the father. Since it is impossible to say, for example, that this horse is Reuben's son, the one to whom God said, "You are my son," must be of His kind and be a God like Him. Moreover, He said, "this day I have begotten you." and the one begotten is of the same species as the one who begot him. Tell them also that in divinity there cannot be a father and a son, because divinity cannot be divided. It is not a body that can be divided, but God is one in all kinds of oneness; He will neither increase, decrease, nor be divided. Tell them further that the father precedes the son in time and that the son is a product of the father. Although neither can have his name without the other – for one cannot be called a father until he has a son and one cannot be called a son unless he has a father – nevertheless, the one called father undoubtedly had existed before he had a son. Consequently, the God in Whom you believe, Whom you call the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost – the part that you call the Father preceded the part you call Son, for if they had always existed together, they would be called twin brothers; you could not call them Father and Son, and not begotten and begetter, for the begetter must undoubtedly precede the begotten. Now if they say to you that the one who is not divine cannot be called the son of God, tell them that we can speak of God only figuratively, as it is said about Him: *the mouth of the Lord, the eyes of the Lord, the ears of the Lord*, and the like, which are figurative. Likewise, it is figurative when Scripture says: *the son of God, the sons of God*, for whoever performs His commandments and His mission is called a son, as the son performs the orders of the father. Therefore, the stars are called the sons of God, as (Job 38:7): "And all the sons of God shouted." Similarly, when man – because of the heavenly spirit within him and prompted by the intelligent soul which guides him – performs the commandments of God, he is called His son. Therefore, He says, "You are My son; today I begot you." And He says (Exod. 4:22): "Israel is my firstborn son." And He says (Deut. 14:1): "You are children of the Lord your God." And He says (ibid. 32:6): "Is he not your father, who possessed you," and He says (II Samuel 7:14): "I shall be to him as a father, and he will be to Me as a son."

Tell them further: This God of Whom you speak – the Father said to the Son, "Request of Me and I shall make nations your inheritance." How is it that the Son requests of the Father? Is he not a God like Him, and does he not have power over the nations and the ends of the earth like Him? Moreover, before the request, nations were not his inheritance; if so, was the strength of this god lacking in the beginning, and did he later gain strength? That cannot be said of a god. Now if they tell you that that is said only concerning the flesh,

[13] Ibid. pp. clxvii-clxviii.

[14] The notation **[sic]** is generally used in written texts to indicate that the previous word or phrase exactly reproduces the original, which may be an unusual form or even an error (as it is in this case).

[that] after the god took on a physical body, he said to the flesh that he should ask of him and he would give him nations as his inheritance, that was not so, for the flesh never had dominion or any ruling power over any nation. If they answer you that he said that the [Christian] faith would be accepted, [that too is not true,] because the majority of the nations, both Jews and Ishmaelites, did not accept his faith.

Behold, I have instructed you what to answer them concerning the psalm. If they ask you its meaning, explain it according to either one of the two interpretations that you wish to choose: either concerning David or the King Messiah, as I have explained to you.

PSALMS 22 - "NAILING" AN ALLEGED CRUCIFIXION SCENARIO[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

A casual reading of Psalms 22, either in the Hebrew or in an accurate translation from the Hebrew, is not likely to raise many eyebrows or draw much attention as having some special and unique significance to Christianity. It is only when one reads the common Christian translations of this psalm (e.g., KJV, NASB, NIV, NKJV, and RSV, to name just a few) that the reasons for its being dubbed the "Crucifixion Psalm" by Christians start to surface. This, of course, makes the 22nd chapter in the Book of Psalms an important element in the portfolio of the Christian missionary. In fact, some Christian sources lay claim to more than 20 passages in Psalms 22 as "messianic prophecies" (i.e., "proof texts") that were allegedly "fulfilled" by Jesus.[2]

This article provides a closer look at the four "proof texts" from Psalms 22 that are most commonly used by missionaries. For each of these, the Christian perspective is contrasted with the Jewish perspective by analyzing the respective Hebrew texts. The analysis demonstrates that Psalms 22 is an historic account by its author, King David, rather than "messianic text" that foretells the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus.

II. COMPARISON OF JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

Side-by-side renditions of key verses in Psalms 22 are displayed in Table II-1. The King James Version (KJV) renditions also show references to key passages in the New Testament, where the respective portions of this psalm are cross-referenced. [The references are found in the New American Standard Bible (NASB), but the corresponding passages, quoted below the table, are quoted from the KJV.]

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:
- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "h̲"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

[2] For example, *Jesus is the Messiah: The Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled By Jesus Christ Ordered by Category* - http://contenderministries.org/prophecy/jesusmessiah2.php

Table II-1 – Psalms 22:1-2[1], 17[16], 19[18][3]

King James Version Translation		Jewish Translation from the Hebrew		Hebrew Text	
Psalms 22				תהילים כב	
1	[To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar, A Psalm of David.]	1	For the conductor, on the *Ayelet haShahar*, a Psalm of David.	לַמְנַצֵּחַ עַל־אַיֶּלֶת הַשַּׁחַר מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד׃	א
	My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? [why art thou so] far from helping me, [and from] the words of my roaring?[i]	2	**My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?** [You are] so far from my salvation, from the words of my loud moaning?	אֵלִי אֵלִי לָמָה עֲזַבְתָּנִי רָחוֹק מִישׁוּעָתִי דִּבְרֵי שַׁאֲגָתִי׃	ב
16	For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: **they pierced** my hands and my feet.	17	For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers encompassed me; **like a lion** [they are at] my hands and my feet.	כִּי סְבָבוּנִי כְּלָבִים עֲדַת מְרֵעִים הִקִּיפוּנִי כָּאֲרִי יָדַי וְרַגְלָי׃	יז
18	They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.[ii]	19	They divide my garments among themselves, and cast lots for my raiment.	יְחַלְּקוּ בְגָדַי לָהֶם וְעַל־לְבוּשִׁי יַפִּילוּ גוֹרָל׃	יט
22	I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.[iii]	23	I will declare Your Name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation will I praise You.	אֲסַפְּרָה שִׁמְךָ לְאֶחָי בְּתוֹךְ קָהָל אֲהַלְלֶךָּ׃	כג

(i) Matthew 27:46(KJV) - And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?

Mark 15:34(KJV) - And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, Lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

(ii) Matthew 27:35(KJV) - And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.

John 19:23-24(KJV) - (23) Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also [his] coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. (24) They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.

(iii) Hebrews 2:12(KJV) - Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

III. Overview of the General Christian Perspective on Psalms 22

The Church has long regarded Psalms 22 as a prophetic messianic psalm that describes the agony of the Passion (Psalms 22:2[1]), the Crucifixion (Psalms 22:17[16]), and the Resurrection (Psalms 22:23[22]) of Jesus, the Messiah of

[3] The notation when verse numbers differ between the Hebrew Bible and the Christian "Old Testament", as they do in Psalms 22, shows the verse number in the Hebrew Bible followed by the verse number in the Christian "Old Testament" in brackets. Example: Psalms 22:17[16].

Christianity. These passages are "quoted" in the New Testament as "evidence" of the fulfillment of the messianic prophecies allegedly contained in this psalm.

Perhaps the most famous “quote” from this psalm found in the New Testament is its opening verse, which is used by the authors of the Gospels of Matthew (Matthew 27:46) and Mark (Mark 15:34) as the passionate statement of the crucified Jesus and his last words before dying on the cross. The authors of the Gospels of Matthew (Matthew 27:35) and John (John 19:24), use verse 19[18] in the "Crucifixion narrative"; while the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (Hebrews 2:12) uses verse 23[22] to explain that Jesus needed to suffer in order to triumph, celebrate, and publish God's gracious dealings upon his resurrection.

These passages are revisited in the analysis that follows. It is interesting to note that one of the most important verses from the Christian perspective, Psalms 22:17[16], is not cited by any of the New Testament authors. Their silence on this verse suggests that this verse, in the form it was known to them, did not have any Christological significance such as is found today in most Christian translations.

Only a summary of the general Christian perspective is presented here. Standard Christian sources, such as commentaries by Matthew Henry (MH) and Jamieson, Fausset, & Brown (JF&B), provide detailed verse-by-verse Christian interpretations of Psalms 22, which are beyond the scope of this essay.

IV. Overview of the General Jewish Perspective on Psalms 22

As was done with the Christian perspective, only a summary of the general Jewish interpretation is presented. A detailed verse-by-verse analysis and commentary is beyond the scope of this essay.

There are several Jewish perspectives on this psalm, all of which agree that King David composed it and is the “voice” throughout, and that it is historical, not messianic. However, they differ on the particulars. The view that is the most consistent with the plain reading of this psalm holds that it is David’s own personal story, in which he describes his own pain, anguish, and longing during those times when he was a fugitive from his enemies, believing that, at times, God had not heeded his pleas for intervention.

He pleads with God to come to his aid since his persecutors are relentlessly pursuing him in their zeal to dispossess him of his kingdom and mantle of royalty. He uses animal motifs of lions, dogs, and bulls/bison, to describe his adversaries, which he also employs on other occasions (e.g., Psalms 17:11,12, 35:17, 59:2-7,15).

Thankful for God’s help in the past and confident of His continued support, David concludes with his expression of gratitude praise.

V. The Christian Perspective vis-à-vis the Hebrew Text on Key Verses

A comparison of the general Christian and Jewish perspectives on Psalms 22 indicates that both cannot be simultaneously valid interpretations. The question is, "*Which of these two views is consistent with the Hebrew Bible (and Israel's history)?*" The analysis that follows focuses on the key verses being "quoted" in the New Testament.

A. Psalms 22:2[1]

As noted earlier, this verse is used in both the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Mark, where it appears as follows:

Matthew 27:46(KJV) - And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Mark 15:34(KJV) – And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

These two verses are now compared; first against each other, then, against the Hebrew text and, finally, against the context of the original verse.

1. Comparing Matthew 27:46 with Mark 15:34

The variations between the two renditions in the Gospels are rather minor, with perhaps, ***Eli*** vs. ***Eloi***, showing the most variance. This is, however, only a superficial problem since:

- **Some of the old manuscripts have either *Eli* or *Eloi* or a mix in both sources**
- **This is a transliterated word from the Hebrew (or Aramaic), and transliteration is inherently subject to variation**

2. Comparing Matthew 27:46 & Mark 15:34 with Psalms 22:2

The transliterated phrases in the Gospels are, "... ***Eli/Eloi, Eli/Eloi, lama sabachthani*** ...". The Hebrew text of the corresponding phrase in Psalms 22:2 reads, אֵלִי אֵלִי לָמָה עֲזַבְתָּנִי (transliterated as ***eLI, eLI, laMAH azavTANi***). The question is: "*Does **sabachTANi** have the same meaning as* עֲזַבְתָּנִי *(**azavTANi**)?*"

The conjugated verb עֲזַבְתָּנִי derives from the root verb עזב (***Ayin-ZAyin-VET***), commonly used in the Hebrew Bible in the context of **[to] abandon**, or **[to] forsake**, or **[to] leave**. The word ***sabachTANi*** exists neither in Hebrew nor in Aramaic. There are two possibilities here:

- The closest Hebrew/Aramaic term to ***sabachTANi*** would be זְבַחְתָּנִי (***z***[e]***vahTANi***), a conjugated verb that derives from the root verb זבח (***ZAyin-VET-HET***), used in the

Hebrew Bible in the context of **[to] sacrifice**, or **[to] slaughter [a sacrificial animal]**, but which never appears in this form in the Hebrew Bible. Making this association would render this phrase as **"My God, My God, why have you slaughtered me?"** Clearly, the two terms and, therefore the phrases, are not equivalent. If this identification is correct then one could speculate that using ***sabachTANi*** in the two Gospels was designed ostensibly to depict the scene of the Passion as a sacrificial offering.

- The *Targum Yonatan*, an ancient interpretive translation of the Hebrew Bible into the Aramaic vernacular, has אֱלִי אֱלִי מְטוּל מַה שְׁבַקְתָּנִי (transliterated as ***eLI, eLI, m^{e}TUL MAH sh^{e}vaqTANi***). The phrase מְטוּל מַה (***m^{e}TUL MAH***) is interchangeable with the word לָמָּה\לָמָה (***laMAH***)**, why**. The conjugated verb שְׁבַקְתָּנִי derives from the Aramaic root verb שׁבק (***SHIN-VET-QOF***), **[to] leave**, or **[to] forsake**. Because the Greek language does not have the "**sh**" sound, the letter שׁ (***SHIN***) is usually transliterated as an "**s**". Moreover, the use of "**ch**" for the letter ק (***QOF***) is plausible, since the actual alphabetic cognate in the Greek language for the letter ק – the ***koppa***, not the Κ (***kappa***) – had been lost centuries earlier, and the letter Χ (***chi***) was used here instead. Given these facts, one could conclude that, even though the way the term appears in the Greek text is not precise or consistent in its transliteration from Aramaic, the Aramaic שְׁבַקְתָּנִי could have become ***sabachTAni*** in the process of transliteration.

The conclusion drawn from the former view does not necessarily survive under the latter perspective.

However, placing this verse into the mouth of a dying Jesus on the cross creates more theological difficulties for the Christian paradigm than it solves. For example, King David makes the following statement (as quoted from the KJV):

> **Psalms 37:25(KJV) - I have been young, and [now] am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.**

This would imply that Jesus was not righteous, i.e., a sinner, since he complained to God about being forsaken. (Christians will argue that, when Jesus was on the cross he, as a “sin sacrifice” by God, carried their sins [2Corinthians 5:21] and was, therefore, forsaken. There are serious flaws in this logic, and these will be dealt with in several future articles.)

Some other issues concerning the Christian claims about Psalms 22:2[1] are:

- **To whom is Jesus actually complaining: "My God, My God [why art thou so] far from helping me, [and from] the words of my roaring?"?**
- **Why, as one of the three divine co-equal components of Christianity's triune godhead, would Jesus be complaining to another of its components?**
- **How is it possible that God (the Father), the first component in the Trinity, cannot hear the cries of God (the Son), the second component in the Trinity?**
- **How is it possible that an omniscient God cannot understand His own predicament?**

Finally, the four Gospel writers do not agree on the last words of Jesus as he was dying on the cross:

<u>Matthew 27:46(KJV)</u> - And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

<u>Mark 15:34(KJV)</u> - And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

<u>Luke 23:46(KJV)</u> - And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

<u>John 19:30(KJV)</u> - When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

In view of these issues, it is evident that putting the words of Psalms 22:1 of the Christian “Old Testament” into the mouth of a dying Jesus on the cross does not work in favor ot the Christian perspective.

3. The Correct Context of Psalms 22:2[1]

King David, feeling that he has been abandoned by God, who was his strength, his shield, and who heard his supplications and intervened on his behalf in the past, lets out this cry of desperation as he is grieved that God is not listening to his prayers this time.

B. Psalms 22:17[16]

This is, perhaps, one of the verses from the Christian "Old Testament" most frequently referenced by Christian missionaries when claiming that the crucifixion of Jesus was foretold. Yet, as was noted above, the authors of the New Testament are silent on this verse, even though is such an important component in the missionary’s portfolio. A comparison of the two translations reveals a major discrepancy in the respective renditions of the term כָּאֲרִי (***ka'ARI***). The typical Jewish rendition of this term is **like a lion**; while the KJV (typical of most Christian translations) has **they pierced**. *Which one of the two is the correct translation?*

A word study on the Hebrew term כָּאֲרִי helps answer this question. For simplicity, the word study includes only cases where the same form of the term appears, i.e., excluding other forms of the root noun אֲרִי (***ARI***) in the singular and plural, and combinations with various prepositions other than that which occurs here [the כָּ- {or כַּ-} (***ka-***) is the Hebrew preposition equivalent to **like**, or **as**]. In addition to the application at Psalms 22:17[16], three other instances of כָּאֲרִי are present in the Hebrew Bible, all of which are shown in Table V.B-1 below, along with their respective KJV translations. Also included in the word study is a single instance of the term וְכַאֲרִי

(*v^e^cha'aRI*), which is the equivalent of כָּאֲרִי with the conjunction וְ- (*v^e^-*), **and**, added to it. This term is included in Table V.B-1 for completeness, since it contains the original term כָּאֲרִי, though it is not critical for illustrating the point to be made here.

<u>Table V.B-1</u> – KJV "Old Testament" renditions of כָּאֲרִי

Reference	Hebrew word	KJV rendition	Comment
Psalms 22:17[16]	כָּאֲרִי	**they pierced**	**Incorrect**
Numbers 24:9	כַּאֲרִי	like a lion	**Correct**
Isaiah 38:13	כָּאֲרִי	like a lion	**Correct**
Ezekiel 22:25	כַּאֲרִי	like a lion	**Correct**
Numbers 23:24	וְכַאֲרִי	and … as a young lion	**Correct**

It appears that the KJV translators had a special reason for rendering the term כָּאֲרִי at Psalms 22:17[16] differently. *Why did the KJV translate the Hebrew term כָּאֲרִי as "**they pierced**" only at Psalms 22:17[16]?*

Could there be a connection between the Hebrew term כָּאֲרִי and a Hebrew verb that describes the act of piercing? The word אֲרִי, **a lion**, is related to another word for **a lion**, אַרְיֵה (*aRYEH*); both are used in the Hebrew Bible. Several verbs are used in the Hebrew Bible to describe an act of piercing: דָּקַר (*daQAR*; e.g., Zechariah 12:10), חָדַר (*<u>h</u>aDAR*; e.g., Ezekiel 21:19), נָקַב (*naQAV*; e.g., Habakkuk 3:14), פָּלַח (*paLA<u>H</u>*; e.g., Job 16:13), and רָצַע (*raTSA*; e.g., Exodus 21:6). Knowledge of Hebrew is not required to recognize that none of these verbs resembles any of the terms כָּאֲרִי, אֲרִי, or אַרְיֵה.

Could there be another linguistic explanation? Two fragments containing Psalms 22:17[16] were discovered among the **Dead Sea Scrolls** (DSS). In the first fragment, which was found at **Qumran** (***4QPs-f***; known as the Qumran MS), the word in question is not preserved. In the second fragment, found at ***Na<u>h</u>al <u>H</u>ever*** [***HHev/Se 4 (Ps)***; known as the Bar Kochba MS], the word is visible. The fragment ***HHev/Se 4 (Ps)*** shows the Hebrew letters כ (***KAF***), א (***Alef***), ר (***RESH***), and what appears to be a somewhat elongated letter י (***YOD***), which some perceive to be the letter ו (***VAV***). Thus, the reading of this word would be either כארי (***ka'aRI***) or כארו (***ka'aRU***), respectively, depending on what the last letter is. Although the latter of these two forms of the term, namely, כארו, has been the center of much controversy, the focus of which is the claim by Christian apologists that the letter א in this word is silent, the linguistic fact is that *<u>no three-letter root verb</u>* exists in the Hebrew language, Biblical or Modern, with a *<u>silent</u>* letter א in the middle position of the root, and conjugated in this fashion (3rd-person, plural masculine gender,

past tense), that has the meaning of **they pierced**, as is rendered in most Christian translations.

Sidebar Note: An image of this fragment is shown in the Appendix to this article. The source of this image, **in which the line with the word in question was "enhanced" for the purpose of that particular publication**, is an article by Tim Hegg, a Christian apologist, titled, *Psalm 22:16 – "like a lion" or "they pierced"?*.[4] The reader should be cautioned that the Hebrew linguistic analysis in the article contains serious flaws. For example, the fragment also appears to show the next word as being misspelled, having an extra letter ה (***HEH***) attached at the end, which makes no grammatical sense. The author shows this incorrect spelling in the text, but in a later segment in which he compares the Masoretic Text against the text from ***HHev/Se 4 (Ps)***, he drops the extra letter ה. Considering the uneven lettering, both in terms of letter sizes as well as inter- and intra-word spacing, what appears to be the extra letter ה following the word ידי, is actually consistent with the first two letters of the Hebrew word that follows it (ורגלי), namely, the letter ו (***VAV***) followed by the letter ר (***RESH***); the rest of the letters in the word are not visible in the fragment. Moreover, Hegg's analysis does not include a relative size comparison of the letters י (***YOD***) and ו in the other words that appear on the fragment. A quick visual examination of these letters in the fragment shows that their respective sizes, their vertical lengths in particular, as well as their positions relative to a line of text, are not uniform and they appear rather similar in size, even equal at times, in several instances.

Without the letter א, and using, for the moment, the argument that the last letter [the elongated letter י] is the letter ו, the word would be כָּרוּ (***kaRU***), for which the Hebrew root verb is כרה (***KOF-RESH-HEH***), **[to] dig [in dirt]**, such as digging a ditch (e.g., Psalms 57:7). In other words, כָּרוּ has the meaning **[they] dug [in dirt]**. This verb is *never* used in the context of **piercing**, either literally or metaphorically, in any of its 15 applications in the Hebrew Bible.

What could cause such a variation between the two terms כארי and כארו, i.e., with an elongated letter י that resembles the letter ו? Since the word כארו does not exist in the Hebrew language, the most plausible explanation is that such discrepancy is simply a case of scribal variation (or error).

Another possibility, one that has been alleged by Christian missionaries, is **textual revisionism** by the Masoretes, who added vowels and melodic trope markings to the Hebrew Bible around the 10th century C.E., i.e., the claim is that the Masoretes changed the original כארו to the current כָּאֲרִי in order to remove any resemblance to a crucifixion scenario. Given the strict prohibitions in the Hebrew Bible concerning any tampering with its text (e.g., Deuteronomy 4:2, Proverbs 30:6), and the fact that the term כארו does not exist in the Hebrew language, this is a rather preposterous claim regarding an unlikely action by the trained scribes.

[4] The article is available at - http://www.wholebible.com/PdfLibrary/Ps22.16.pdf

The dating of the ***Na<u>h</u>al <u>H</u>ever*** fragment[5] suggests that the discrepancy could be the result of exactly the reverse of the previous claim. Namely, it could be the product of an attempt by second century CE (early) Christians to alter the original כארי to read כארו, thereby making it appear like the verb כָּרוּ, **they dug**. This would have accomplished the effect of aligning the word with the events of the early first century CE. It is also interesting to note that in the **LXX** (the Christian translation into Greek of the Hebrew Bible), where this verse is numbered as Psalms 21:17, the reading is **ωρυξαν** (***oruksan***), which stems from the root **ορύσσω** (***orusso***), **to dig**, as in **[to] dig a trench**. Liddell & Scott (Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, <u>*An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*</u>) do not list a meaning of **pierce** for this word, and the identical usages occur only in early Christian renditions (Arndt and Gingrich, <u>*Lexicon of the Greek Testament*</u>). This **LXX** reading could possibly stem from a presumed, though non-existent, Hebrew reading (which makes no sense in context) of כָּרוּ [i.e., without the letter א - not the reading כארו]. As noted above, the Hebrew word כָּרוּ means **[they] dug [in dirt]**, and it is <u>never</u> used in the Hebrew Bible with the context of **piercing**.

A final clue is contained within the New Testament itself. The authors of the New Testament are silent on Psalms 22:17[16], a verse deemed so central to Christianity in the description of the crucifixion itself. Given its significance to the Church, the question is: "*Why is the New Testament silent on this verse?*"

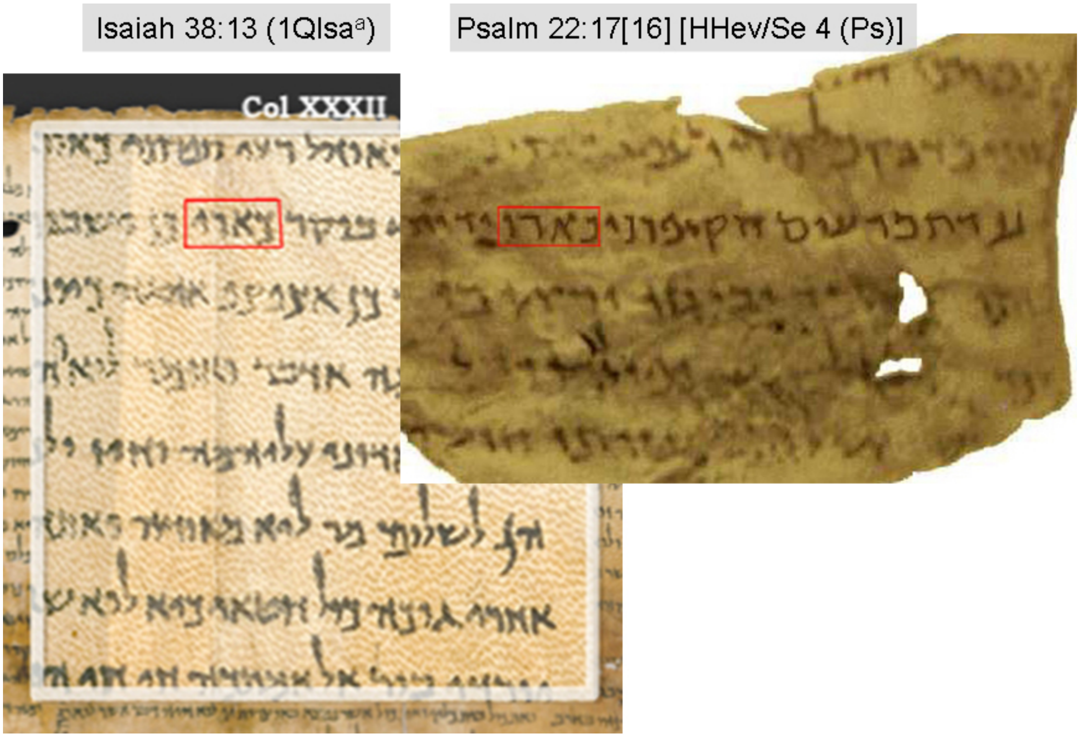
One possible answer is that none of the authors of the four Gospels, all of which contain a narrative of the crucifixion, was aware of this verse. That answer is not likely, however, since all of them referenced other parts of this psalm. Another possibility is that none of the authors saw this verse as being significant, or even relevant, to their respective crucifixion narratives. But this answer would be inconsistent with the important role the verse plays in the Christian perspective.

Perhaps the most likely answer is that the common Christian rendition, **they pierced** in the "Old Testament", came <u>*after*</u> the New Testament was written, i.e., the authors of the New Testament were unaware of a **future revision** of Psalms 22:17[16], in which the Church attempted to create a better fit with the crucifixion narrative. There was no need to mistranslate the term כָּאֲרִי in Numbers 23:24, 24:9, Isaiah 38:13, and Ezekiel 22:25, since these passages, unlike Psalms 22:17[16], had no Christological value to the Church, and could not help improve the fit into the Hebrew Bible of any component of Christian theology.

[5] The *Na<u>h</u>al <u>H</u>ever* papyri are dated as late as the second century CE according to DSS scholars and researchers; e.g. G. Vermes, <u>*An Introduction to the Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*</u>, p. 29.

The knockout punch to the Christian claim about this verse is delivered by the *Isaiah A Scroll* (**1QIsa^{a}**),[6] dated to the 4th century BCE),[7] an almost completely preserved scroll that closes the case on the claim that כָּאֲרִי means "**they pierced**". Recall that Table V.B-1 shows the word כָּאֲרִי appearing at Isaiah 38:13. Figure V.B-1 below displays a side-by-side comparison of the word כארי (inscribed in a red box) as it appears in both Dead Sea Scroll sources – in the (enhanced line in the) ***HHev/Se 4 (Ps)*** fragment on the right and in the ("raw") ***1QIsa^{a}*** Isaiah A Scroll on the left. The two words are almost identically scribed (note the last letter ו on the left. The KJV renders these two words as **they pierced** and **like a lion**, respectively.

Figure V.B-1 – The word כארי as it appears in two Dead Sea Scrolls sources



This should remove any doubt about the mistranslation "**they pierced**" in the KJV and many other Christian Bibles.

The correct context of this verse is that it describes, in metaphorical terms, enemies surrounding their target, just like vicious dogs and lions surround their prey before they go in for the "kill". This, again, is consistent with King David's experiences throughout his life, being the targets of plots to either kill him or to disown him of his kingdom.

[6] The Great Isaiah Scroll - http://www.imj.org.il/shrine_center/Isaiah_Scrolling/index.html
[7] Geza Vermes, *An Introduction to the Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 24, Fortress Press (1999)

C. Psalms 22:19[18]

The author of the Gospel of John points to this verse as being a prophecy that became fulfilled when Jesus was on the cross:

> **John 19:23-24(KJV) – (23) Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also [his] coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. (24) They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.**

The previous verse, Psalms 22:18[17], is critical to obtaining a correct understanding of the true context of this verse:

> **Psalms 22:18 - I can count all my bones. They look and stare at me.**

> **Psalms 22:17(KJV) - I may tell all my bones: they look [and] stare upon me.**

As can be seen from the above quotes, Psalms 22:18[17] describes the subject of v. 19[18] as counting his bones while those who are taking his garments look on and gloat. This starving man is so skinny that his bones are visible and can be counted. The "voice" here is still King David's, as it is throughout the psalm, and he uses the act of taking and dividing his garments as a metaphorical reference to the desires of his enemies to take away his mantle of royalty and make it their own.

D. Psalms 22:23[22]

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews "quotes" this verse at Hebrews 2:12 to help explain why Jesus needed to suffer for humanity. However, the one who speaks here is the same person that speaks throughout the psalm, including Psalms 22:7[6], where he refers to himself as being a worm:

> **Psalms 22:7[6] - But I am a worm, and not a man; a reproach of man and despised by the people.**

In the Christian scenario, it would be Jesus calling himself a worm.

This reference to a worm as a metaphor for people is not unique in the Hebrew Bible. Isaiah likens the Jewish people to a worm:

> **Isaiah 41:14 - Fear not, O worm of Jacob, the number of Israel; "I have helped you," says the Lord, and your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.**

Bildad the Shuhite, one of Job's friends, refers to man as a worm:

> **Job 25:6 - How much less, man, who is a worm, and the son of man, who is a maggot!"**

In Psalms 22:7[6], King David uses this metaphor as he describes the plight of his own people. *Does the worm metaphor fit Jesus? Would anyone, other*

than pagans, some of whom worship worms, use this metaphor to describe a divine being?

The theme in Psalms 22:23[22] is the praising of God's name for being so good and benevolent, a theme that is often used by King David in his other psalms (e.g., Psalms 9:3, 54:8, 61:9, 69:31).

VI. Summary

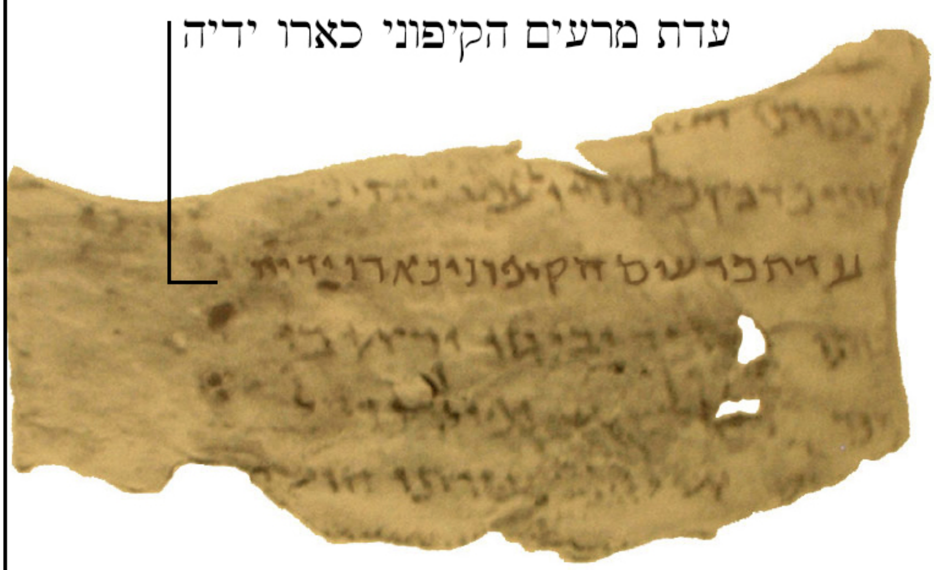
The linguistic analysis and thematic descriptions presented in this article have demonstrated and affirmed the validity of the Jewish perspective of Psalms 22, and that the standard Christian interpretation is based on mistranslations and a disregard of the context of the psalm.

The Jewish perspective that this psalm is historical is based on the fact that its author, King David, who is also the “voice” throughout it, describes events and scenarios from his personal life, and makes certain proclamations based on these experiences.

The Christian perspective appears to have been fashioned with hindsight after the New Testament was written, i.e., knowing what the narratives in the New Testament have described and implementing some editorial enhancements in its translations, the text of Psalms 22 was transformed into a template for the prophetic description of the crucifixion that would take place a millennium after these words were recorded. The silence of the New Testament on this psalm’s central verse to the Christian crucifixion scenario, Psalms 22:17[16], lends credence to this conclusion.

Appendix

A-1. The Dead Sea Scrolls Fragment HHevSe4Ps



The scrap from Psalm 22 found at Nachal Hever (5/6Hev - Col. XI, frag. 9) with the line under investigation from Psalm 22 enhanced.

[Source: Tim Hegg, *Psalm 22:16 – "like a lion" or "they pierced"?* - http://www.wholebible.com/PdfLibrary/Ps22.16.pdf.]

A-2. Hebrew text of Psalms 22:15-20[14-19] {תהילים כב,טו:כ}

The portion included in ***HHevSe4Ps*** is shown in highlighted Form.

כמים נשפכתי והתפרדו כל
עצמותי היה לבי כדונג נמס בתוך מעי יבש כחרש כחי
ולשוני מדבק מלקוחי ולעפר מות תשפתני כי סבבוני
כלבים עדת מרעים הקיפוני כארי ידי ורגלי אספר
כל עצמותי המה יביטו יראו־בי יחלקו
בגדי להם ועל לבושי יפילו גורל ואתה יהוה
אל תרחק אילותי לעזרתי חושה

DEBUNKING "PROOF TEXTS" FROM THE PSALMS[1]
PART 1 - PSALMS 8, 16, 18

I. INTRODUCTION

Literally hundreds of so-called "proof texts" have been identified by Christian missionaries as representing alleged prophecies in the Christian "Old Testament", which are claimed to have been "fulfilled" by Jesus, the Messiah of Christianity, according to accounts in the New Testament. These passages are referred to as "messianic prophecies" in Christian sources.[2]

The two most heavily mined sources for Christian "messianic prophecies" are the Book of Isaiah and the Book of Psalms, respectively. In a series of essays, of which this is the first one, claims of "messianic prophecies" in the Psalms are investigated. Several major Christian "messianic prophecies" from the Psalms have been analyzed and refuted in separate essays,[3,4,5] and will not be repeated in this series.

The Internet abounds with sources that list Christian "messianic prophecies" along with alleged accounts of their "fulfillment" in the New Testament. Most of these sources contain overlapping lists. Therefore, only one such list, called the ***reference list***, will be used in this series of essays as the source for the Christian "messianic prophecies" to be examined.[6]

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:
- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "h"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

[2] This terminology is also used to identify the items on the messianic agenda that appears in the Hebrew Bible, except that none of these Jewish "messianic prophecies" have yet been fulfilled.

[3] Psalms 2: *"Kiss the Son"? Where Is that Son of A Gun?* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Psa2.pdf

[4] Psalms 22: *Nailing An Alleged Crucifixion Scenario* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Psa22.pdf

[5] Psalms 110: *To not Know "the Lord" from "my master" Can End in Disaster* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Psa110.pdf

[6] *Jesus is the Messiah: The Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled By Jesus Christ Ordered by Category* - http://contenderministries.org/prophecy/jesusmessiah2.php

II. "MESSIANIC PROPHECY": COMPARING CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH PERSPECTIVES

The set of "messianic prophecies" identified by Christians in the Christian "Old Testament" is not congruent with the set of "messianic agenda items" that was developed in the Hebrew Bible by the Jewish prophets.

According to the Christian view, "messianic prophecy" consists of texts from the Christian "Old Testament", which are claimed to deal with the coming of the Messiah at some time in the future, and which were allegedly fulfilled in the person of Jesus, as related through the accounts in the New Testament. Christians believe that, by the direct intervention in human history – sending His "son", Jesus, to fulfill these "messianic prophecies" – God made His will and purpose known to mankind. Thus, for Christians, "messianic prophecy" is the result of a "new revelation" rather than simply the output from a nation that was longing for a better life in a better world. So that the last word on the meaning of "messianic prophecy" in the Christian "Old Testament", accordingly, is found in the New Testament and in Jesus himself.

The Jewish messianic vision is an original concept at the heart of traditional Judaism, and the dream of an eventual redemption is one of its foundations. The Hebrew phrase אַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים (***a<u>h</u>arit ha'yamim***), **the end of days**, that is often associated with a future blissful era known in Judaism as the "messianic era", appears in the Hebrew Bible as early as Genesis 49:1, where Jacob summons his sons in order to bestow his blessings upon them. This chapter and the blessing of Judah in particular (Genesis 49:8-12), could be viewed as the cornerstone of traditional Judaism's messianic paradigm. The full picture of the Jewish messianic vision was developed primarily through the writings of the prophets.

In sharp contrast with the Christian perspective, little is written in the Hebrew Bible about any physical characteristics and attributes of the individual who will be the central figure in the messianic era, the promised future King of Israel, מָשִׁיחַ (***mashi'a<u>h</u>***), the **Jewish Messiah**. The Hebrew Bible specifies his pedigree – a bloodline relationship to King David, his family status – married with children, and his leadership qualities – political and spiritual.[7] In their writings, the prophets focused on creating a "messianic agenda" with detailed descriptions of the conditions that will prevail in the messianic era, the completion of which will lead to what the prophets had envisioned. The items on the "messianic agenda" comprise the collection of "messianic prophecies" in traditional Judaism.

The principal difference between the Christian and Jewish views of "messianic prophecy" concerns the focus and time of fulfillment. In the Christian perspective, the claimed "messianic prophecies" deal primarily with Jesus, the central figure in the Christian messianic vision, that he "fulfilled" these in the first century C.E. In the Jewish view, the passages identified as "messianic prophecies" describe conditions that will prevail at a future time when מָשִׁיחַ, the central figure in Judaism's

[7] See the essay *<u>Messiah Wanted</u>* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Wanted.pdf

messianic paradigm, will reign, and which will result from his successful completion of the "messianic agenda".

The divergence of these two perspectives also manifests itself in terms of the quantity of passages that are identified as "messianic prophecy" by each. Being focused on the individual, the Christian perspective has produced literally hundreds of so-called "proof texts", i.e., Christian "Old Testament" texts labeled as "messianic prophecies", which are claimed to have been "fulfilled" by Jesus according to accounts in the New Testament. The Jewish messianic paradigm, which focuses on the conditions that will prevail due to the achievements of the individual, consists of a handful of significant "messianic agenda items" that will have global impact. A few additional "messianic agenda items" exist as well, and these deal with situations, conditions, and events that are of a more local and particular nature with regard to the Jewish people and the land of Israel.

III. ANALYSIS OF CLAIMED "MESSIANIC PROPHECIES" AND THEIR "FULFILLMENTS"

A prophecy is said to have been fulfilled when the foretold event, condition, or situation has occurred, and one needs no longer await its completion or fulfillment. On the other hand, a prophecy that has not yet materialized, or is yet to be completed, remains a prophecy not fulfilled.

The items typically claimed by Christians to be "messianic prophecy" often consist of a short passage, a single verse, or even a portion of a verse, from the Christian "Old Testament", and the same is true of the respective texts in the New Testament that are claimed to be accounts of "fulfillment". Christians also take it for granted that Jesus was of King David's lineage.[8]

In this essay, the "messianic prophecies" claimed to be present in Psalms 8, 16, and 18, along with the respective accounts of their "fulfillment" from the New Testament are addressed. The analysis aims to determine whether these matched pairs of passages in the Christian "Old Testament" and New Testament qualify as a "messianic prophecy" and its "fulfillment", respectively.

A. Psalms 8

The *reference list* indicates that Psalms 8 contains two "messianic prophecies" that are "fulfilled" according to the New Testament, as shown in Table III.A-1.

[8] This is a false premise. See the essay *The Right to the Throne or to the "Tomb of the Unknown"?* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Throne.pdf

Table III.A-1 – **Claimed "Messianic Prophecies" and their "Fulfillments"**

Statement	Citations[9]	
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"
Infants would give praise to the Messiah	Psalms 8:3[2]	Matthew 21:15-16
The Messiah would be given authority over all things	Psalms 8:7[6]	Matthew 28:18

1. Overview

Following is a summary description of this psalm to help put its context into perspective.

> **THE PARADOX OF MAN: A new note is struck. Instead of supplication in a time of danger, we have a profound reflection upon man's status in the universe as testimony to the infinite greatness of God. The Psalmist meditates upon the grandeur of His creation and the place which the human being occupies therein. On the one hand, man is so insignificant in comparison with the vastness of God's works that it is surprising that the Creator designs to give him a thought. On the other hand, he is the human lord of the earth and endowed with powers which make him little less than divine. Both perceptions are true and there is no contradiction. The dignified position which man as a creature of God holds in the world is only proof of the incomparable majesty of His Maker.[10]**

The superscription identifies King David as the author of this psalm. He marvels, on behalf of Israel, about God's handiwork in the universe, and he recognizes that mankind's accomplishments are achieved only through His gifts to humanity. A notable characteristic of this psalm is the absence from the Hebrew text of verbs conjugated in the future tense.

2. Investigating claimed "Messianic Prophecies" [and "Fulfillments"]

a. *Infants would give praise to the Messiah*

The relevant texts from the King James Version (KJV) "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are provided in Table III.A.2.a-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

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[9] In cases where verse numbers differ between the Hebrew Bible and the Christian "Old Testament", the citation shows the verse number in the Hebrew Bible followed by the verse number in the Christian "Old Testament" in brackets. Example: Psalms 8:3[2].

[10] *Soncino Books of the Bible – The Psalms*, Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, Editor, p. 18, The Soncino Press (1992)

Table III.A.2.a-1 – Psalms 8:3[2] and Matthew 21:15-16

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew
Psalms 8:2	Matthew 21:15-16	Psalms 8:3
Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.	15. And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased, 16. And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?	Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings You have established strength because of Your adversaries, in order to put an end to enemy and avenger.

According to the text, and supported by its description, this psalm is not messianic in any way. God's might and grandeur are evident from the time a child is born and the miraculous way in which he or she is able to draw sustenance from the mother, to how He had firmly established His presence in order to defeat his adversaries who deny it. This is an ongoing process, and it is not characterized by any unique connection with the messianic era or with its central figure, מָשִׁיחַ.

The "fulfillment" account in the New Testament has the author of the Gospel of Matthew putting a twisted version of David's words into the mouth of Jesus in order to have his readers believe that the situation described in verse 15 was foretold in the psalm. Yet, both content and context of the passage in the psalm are significantly different from the way it is presented in the New Testament.

Conclusion: Psalms 8:3[2] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

b. *The Messiah would be given authority over all things*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.A.2.b-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.A.2.b-1 – Psalms 8:7[6] and Matthew 28:18

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew
Psalms 8:6	Matthew 28:18	Psalms 8:7
Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:	And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.	You give him dominion over the work of Your hands; You have placed everything beneath his feet.

Who is the one to whom King David refers as “him” and “his”? The answer is found two verses earlier:

> **<u>Psalms 8:5[4]</u> - What is man that You should remember him, and the son of man that You should be mindful of him?**

King David is speaking of mortal mankind here. In fact, verses 7-9[6-8] are based on the following passage:

> **<u>Genesis 1:28</u> - And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the sky and over all the beasts that tread upon the earth."**

God has put mankind in charge of all things on earth, not in heaven.

The declaration in Matthew 28:18 that is attributed to Jesus by the author of the Gospel of Matthew, is part of the narrative that follows the alleged "resurrection", in which Jesus describes his "great commission", which includes dominion of heaven as well. However, connecting this "fulfillment" with Psalms 8:7[6] also implies that the Messiah of Christianity is a mortal human, in contradiction to the Christian messianic paradigm.

<u>Conclusion</u>: Psalms 8:7[6] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

B. Psalms 16

The *reference list* indicates that Psalms 16 contains three "messianic prophecies" that are "fulfilled" according to the New Testament, as shown in Table III.B-1.

<u>Table III.B-1</u> – Claimed "Messianic Prophecies" and their "Fulfillments"

Statement	Citations	
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"
The Messiah would be resurrected	Psalms 16:8-10a	Matthew 28:6
The Messiah's body would not be subject to decay	Psalms 16:8-10b	Acts 13:35-37
The Messiah would be exalted to the presence of God	Psalms 16:11	Acts 2:25-33

1. Overview

Following is a summary description of this psalm to help put its context into perspective.

> **HAPPINESS THROUGH GOD: Apart from the prayer in the opening words, the Psalm is a hymn of joy. Ineffable happiness has been David's lot because of his complete submission to God. It is pure speculation to assign the composition to any particular period in David's life.[11]**

[11] *<u>Soncino Books of the Bible – The Psalms</u>*, Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, Editor, p. 37, The Soncino Press (1992)

The superscription identifies King David as the author of this psalm. He starts with a brief prayer, and then addresses his own soul and repeats what it said to God. He speaks of his associating only with the godly, of God being his portion, and of his relationship with God.

The problems with the last four of this psalm's 11 verses, those that are identified by Christians as "messianic prophecies", are addressed in the respective sections that follow. However, it is worthwhile to mention that the first seven verses are problematic for the Christian perspective as well, but are not included in the present analysis since they are not included in the *reference list*.

2. Investigating claimed "Messianic Prophecies" [and "Fulfillments"]

a. *The Messiah would be resurrected*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.B.2.a-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.B.2.a-1 – Psalms 16:8-10a and Matthew 28:6

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 16:8-10a	**Matthew 28:6**	**Psalms 16:8-10a**
8. I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. 9. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. 10. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; [neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.]	He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.	8. I have placed the Lord before me constantly; because [He is] at my right hand, I will not falter. 9. Therefore, my heart rejoiced, and my soul was glad; even my flesh shall dwell in safety. 10. For You shall not forsake my soul to the grave; [You shall not allow Your pious one to see the pit.]

The Hebrew term שְׁאוֹל (***sh***^{e}*OL*), which means **the grave**, and is generally applied in this context throughout the Hebrew Bible, has been mistranslated as **hell** in the KJV rendition of verse 10a. It is worth noting that Biblical Hebrew contains no terminology for the common Christian idea of eternal damnation called "hell".

The concept of שְׁאוֹל was familiar to the ancient Israelites, and to the Jewish people throughout history. In general, this poetic term refers to the world of the dead – the place where the body goes after a person dies.

Some exceptions exist in the Hebrew Bible where שְׁאוֹל is applied metaphorically to describe a personal experience of great anxiety and despair. Examples include Isaiah 5:15[16], where it is depicted as a devouring monster, and at Jonah 2:3, where the prophet uses the term as a metaphor for his grave deep in the belly of the whale.

The term שְׁאוֹל appears in the Hebrew Bible 65 times. The KJV translators were inconsistent in their renditions of this term, which creates theological issues for Christians, as the following example demonstrates:

> **Psalms 139:8(KJV) - If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell [שְׁאוֹל], behold, thou art there.**

According to the KJV rendition, the Christian god shares "hell" with its archenemy, “the Devil”, who has his own power and authority that he uses to oppose god and perpetrate evil. *How, then, can the two occupy the same space?*

Verse 10a does not speak of the resurrection of the dead. King David is confident that, when the time comes for him to die, his soul would ascend to be with God rather than descend to the grave along with his body. King Solomon spoke about this process as well:

> **Ecclesiastes 12:7 - And the dust returns to the earth as it was; and the spirit returns to God who gave it.**

Clearly, this is the same idea as is described by his father, King David. There is nothing in the context of this psalm that speaks of a resurrection, and certainly not about a Messiah who dies and is resurrected.

Conclusion: Psalms 16:8-10a is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

b. *The Messiah's body would not be subject to decay*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.B.2.b-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.B.2.b-1 – Psalms 16:8-10b and Acts 13:35-37

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 16:8-10b	**Acts 13:35-37**	**Psalms 16:8-10b**
8. I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. 9. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. 10. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.	35. Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. 36. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: 37. But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.	8. I have placed the Lord before me constantly; because [He is] at my right hand, I will not falter. 9. Therefore, my heart rejoiced, and my soul was glad; even my flesh shall dwell in safety. 10. For You shall not forsake my soul to the grave; You shall not allow Your pious one to see the pit.

In the passage from the Hebrew Bible, King David describes the reasons for being happy throughout his life, and in verse 10 he points out that he will rejoice even in death because he knows that, although his body will go into the grave, his soul will go to God.

Two mistranslations appear in the KJV rendition of verse 10b. These same mistranslations also occur in the opening verse of the "fulfillment" account. Since the (Greek) New Testament was completed before the KJV was published in 1611 C.E., and if the English translation from the Greek is correct, it is reasonable to assume that the mistranslations in the KJV followed from it. First is the rendition as **thine Holy One** of the Hebrew inflected noun חֲסִידְךָ, (***h**asidCHA*), which actually means **your pious one**. This term derives from the root noun חָסִיד (***h**asID*), **a pious one**, and is used in this context throughout the Hebrew Bible.

Second is the rendition as **corruption** (meaning **decay**) of the Hebrew term שַׁחַת\שָׁחַת (*SHA**h**at*; this word appears in the Hebrew Bible in either form), which actually means **a grave**, or **a pit**, and is generally applied in this context throughout the Hebrew Bible. Since שְׁאוֹל and שַׁחַת\שָׁחַת are used interchangeably in Biblical Hebrew, and since the former was used in verse 10a, it is rather natural that, for poetic and stylistic reasons, the author used the latter in verse10b, in the context of "a grave", which is also the meaning of "the pit".\

The Modern Hebrew word שַׁחַת has other meanings in addition to "a grave" and "a pit", namely, **fodder**, **destruction/ruin**, and **corruption**, but these are never used in the Hebrew Bible. Therefore, as it pertains to the full verse 10, the use of the pair שְׁאוֹל and שַׁחַת in the context of "a grave", is much more meaningful than the two unrelated renderings as "hell" and "corruption" that appear in the KJV translation of the verse.

The author of the "fulfillment" account in the New Testament, with the help of these mistranslations, replaces King David with Jesus. Yet, the passage cited as the "messianic prophecy" contains neither an explicit reference nor does it allude to a body being preserved after death.

Conclusion: Psalms 16:8-10b is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

c. *The Messiah would be exalted to the presence of God*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.B.2.c-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.B.2.c-1 – Psalms 16:11 and Acts 2:25-33

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 16:11	**Acts 2:25-33**	**Psalms 16:11**
Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.	25. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: 26. Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: 27. Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. 28. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. 29. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. 30. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; 31. He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. 32. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. 33. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.	You shall let me know the way of life, the fullness of joys in Your presence. There is pleasantness in Your right hand forever.

As he ends his prayer, King David asks God to teach him "the way of life" that will enable him to enjoy his place in the world to come as he sits to the right of the Creator (see Psalms 110:1 and the article on it)[12].

Is this messianic text? No, since מָשִׁיחַ will be an earthly king who will reign over an earthly kingdom. Could it be pre-messianic? Perhaps, since, according to some Jewish Sages, מָשִׁיחַ will be King David himself, who will be sitting to the right of God while waiting for the resurrection of the dead.

Conclusion: Psalms 16:11 is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

C. Psalms 18

The *reference list* indicates that Psalms 18 contains one "messianic prophecy" that is "fulfilled" according to the New Testament, as shown in Table III.C-1.

Table III.C-1 – Claimed "Messianic Prophecies" and their "Fulfillments"

Statement	Citations	
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"
The Messiah would come for all people	Psalms 18:50[49]	Ephesians 3:4-6

1. Overview

Following is a summary description of this psalm to help put its context into perspective.

THE SONG OF DAVID: The inflexible trust in God which David had displayed throughout his trials receives the testimony of its worth in this exultant hymn of thanksgiving. It has been embodied in his biography (2 Samuel 22), and comparison discloses a number of verbal differences. Hirsch cites the explanation that the changes that appear in the Psalm were made by David himself when he later adapted the song as a national prayer. Rashi and others are of the opinion that the Psalm was first composed during David's old age, in reference to his earlier experiences, while Abarbanel maintains that David wrote the original version, in Samuel, during his younger years while still burdened by problems and surrounded by enemies. It is not so much a song of triumph as it is a prayer in times of distress.[13]

The superscription identifies King David as the author of this psalm. Except for some minor differences, this psalm and the 22nd chapter in the Book of Second Samuel are the same. It is King David's Song of Gratitude for being delivered from the hands of his enemies, including King Saul.

[12] *Psalms 110 - To Not Know "the L-rd" from "my master" Can End in Disaster* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Psa110.pdf
[13] *Soncino Books of the Bible – The Psalms*, Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, Editor, p. 43, The Soncino Press (1992)

2. Investigating claimed "Messianic Prophecies" [and "Fulfillments"]

a. *The Messiah would come for all people*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.C.2.a-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.C.2.a-1 – Psalms 18:50[49] and Ephesians 3:4-6

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 18:49	**Ephesians 3:3-6***	**Psalms 18:50**
Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name.	[3. How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,] 4. Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 5. Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; 6. That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:	Therefore, I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the nations, and to Your name I will sing praises.

* Verse 3 is quoted in brackets just for reference purposes due to the parenthetical comment that starts in the last phrase and continues to the end of verse 4.

In this biographical account, King David describes the dangers that had befallen him throughout his life, and how God had always rescued him from all those perilous situations. In verse 50[49], the only verse out of this psalm's 51 verses chosen by Christians as a "messianic prophecy", King David declares that, in return for his deliverance, he will acknowledge his indebtedness to God before Israel and all the people of the nations that acknowledged him and which he conquered (see, e.g., 2Samuel 8).

In the "fulfillment" text has Paul claims a new divine "revelation", one that no man had before, that the knowledge of Jesus would unite all people. Paul/s claim of this new "revelation" contradicts the prophet Amos, who wrote that Israel received all that was to be revealed through the prophets:

Amos 3:7 - For the Lord God does nothing unless He has revealed His secret to His servants, the prophets.

Whose account would be more credible, the one by the prophet Amos, one of the 55 true prophets of Israel named in the Hebrew Bible, or the one by Paul, the inventor of Christianity?[14]

Conclusion: Psalms 18:50[49] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

IV. SUMMARY

In this first in a series of essays on so-called "proof texts" in the Psalms, six such texts from Psalms 8, 16, and 18, which are claimed to be Christian "messianic prophecies", along with their respective "fulfillment" texts from the New Testament, were investigated. The analysis addressed content, context, and correspondence between each pair of texts, in order to assess the validity of the claims. The results of the analysis are summarized in Table IV-1.

Table IV-1 – Claimed "messianic prophecies" in Psalms 8, 16, and 18, and their "fulfillments"

Statement	Citations		Valid?
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
Infants would give praise to the Messiah	Psalms 8:3[2]	Matthew 21:16	**NO**
The Messiah would be given authority over all things	Psalms 8:7[6]	Matthew 28:18	**NO**
The Messiah would be resurrected	Psalms 16:8-10a	Matthew 28:6	**NO**
The Messiah's body would not be subject to decay	Psalms 16:8-10b	Acts 13:35-37	**NO**
The Messiah would be exalted to the presence of God	Psalms 16:11	Acts 2:25-33	**NO**
The Messiah would come for all people	Psalms 18:50[49]	Ephesians 3:4-6	**NO**

In addition to the fact that none of these six claimed “messianic prophecies” are valid, it is evident that the focus of even this small sample Christian "messianic prophecy" and "fulfillment" pairs is on Jesus, the central figure in the Christian messianic vision, not on the conditions that will prevail in the world due to his accomplishments. As was noted in Section II, this is the principal difference between the messianic visions of Christianity and Judaism, a fact that will be further validated as this series progresses.

[14] Hyam Maccoby, *The Mythmaker: Paul and the Invention of Christianity*, Barnes & Noble Books (1998)

DEBUNKING "PROOF TEXTS" FROM THE PSALMS[1]
PART 2 - PSALMS 27, 31, 34, 35, 38

I. INTRODUCTION

This is the second in a series of essays in which claims by Christian missionaries concerning "messianic prophecies" in the Psalms are investigated. The first essay covered the six commonly claimed "messianic prophecies" in Psalms 8, 16, and 18.[2]

This essay investigates eight additional claims of “messianic prophecies” in the Christian “Old Testament” and their respective accounts of “fulfillment” in the New Testament, all of which are taken from the same ***reference list*** that was previously used.[3]

II. "MESSIANIC PROPHECY": COMPARING CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH PERSPECTIVES

This was covered in detail in Section II in the first essay of this series (please see footnote 2) and will not be repeated in this and the remaining essays.

III. ANALYSIS OF CLAIMED "MESSIANIC PROPHECIES" AND THEIR "FULFILLMENTS"

The "messianic prophecies" claimed to be present in Psalms 27, 31, 34, 35, and 38, along with the respective accounts of their "fulfillment" from the New Testament, are addressed in this essay. The analysis aims to determine whether any of these pairs of passages in the Christian "Old Testament" and New Testament qualify as a "messianic prophecy" and its "fulfillment", respectively.

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:
- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as “h” (underlined)
  - The letter כ is transliterated as “ch”
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as “k”
  - The letter ק is transliterated as “q”
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted “e” following the consonant
  - There is no “doubling” of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

[2] *Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms, Part 1 - Psalms 8, 16, 18* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt1.pdf

[3] *Jesus is the Messiah: The Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled By Jesus Christ Ordered by Category* - http://contenderministries.org/prophecy/jesusmessiah2.php

A. Psalms 27

The *reference list* indicates that Psalms 27 contains two "messianic prophecies" that are "fulfilled" according to the New Testament, as shown in Table III.A-1.

Table III.A-1 – Claimed "Messianic Prophecies" and their "Fulfillments"

Statement	Citations	
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"
The Messiah's enemies would stumble and fall when they came for him	Psalms 27:2	John 18:3-6
The Messiah would be accused by false witnesses	Psalms 27:12	Matthew 26:59-61

1. Overview

Following is a summary description of this psalm to help put its context into perspective.

> **HYMN OF CONFIDENCE: This is the third consecutive Psalm which has the prefix *of David* without the word 'mizmor.' It is another personal prayer for help and guidance, which at the same time expresses absolute trust in God and fearlessness from enemies. David's sole ambition is a personal relationship with God and this theme is stressed several times throughout the Psalm (verses 4-6). The composition falls into two distinct divisions. The first half is dedicated to the serenity of those who trust in God while the last verses show concern that without aid from God, his aims cannot be accomplished. In Jewish ritual this Psalm is recited daily throughout the months of *Elul* and the Ten Days of Penitence as preparation for the advent of the New Year and Day of Atonement. The *adversaries* (verse 12) are metaphorically interpreted as the promptings to sin from which deliverance is sought.**[4]

The superscription identifies King David as the author of this psalm. He expresses his continuing desire to dwell in the House of God (see Ps 23:6), which is the place where constancy prevails when one seeks refuge from the problems being encountered in life.

2. Investigating claimed "Messianic Prophecies" [and "Fulfillments"]

a. *The Messiah's enemies would stumble and fall when they came for him*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.A.2.a-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

[4] Soncino Books of the Bible – The Psalms, Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, Editor, p. 78, The Soncino Press (1992)

Table III.A.2.a-1 – **Psalms 27:2 and John 18:3-6**

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 27:2	**John 18:3-6**	**Psalms 27:2**
When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.	3. Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. 4. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? 5. They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. 6. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.	When evildoers draw near to me to devour my flesh, my adversaries and my enemies against me-they stumbled and fell.

King David opens the psalm by acknowledging that God illuminates his path in life and provides his deliverance, thus leaves him nobody of whom he should be fearful. In this verse, he describes how the efforts of those who sought to do him ill did not succeed, for which he uses the figurative description that his enemies stumbled and fell.

This figurative phrase, "**stumbled and fell**", appealed to Christian apologists since they were able to match it with a similar phrase they found in the New Testament, where those who came to arrest Jesus retreated upon hearing him identify himself, and literally fell to the ground. Thus was created the "fulfillment" text in the New Testament; clearly absurd, as the phrase has been taken completely out-of-context.

Conclusion: Psalms 27:2 is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

b. *The Messiah would be accused by false witnesses*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.A.2.b-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.A.2.b-1 – Psalms 27:12 and Matthew 26:59-61

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew
Psalms 27:12	Matthew 26:59-61	Psalms 27:12
Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.	59. Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; 60. But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, 61. And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.	Do not deliver me to the desires of my adversaries, for false witnesses and speakers of evil have risen against me.

David was the target and victim of many slander campaigns. Very prominent among these are two cases where King Saul was incited against David. One involved Doeg the Edomite (see 1Samuel 22), and the other involved the people of Ziph, the Ziphites (see 1Samuel 23). Yet David was always able to escape unharmed from these situations.

By combining historical accounts of King David with the requirement on the testimony of two witnesses, the author of the "fulfillment" account tries to create a "prophecy" that is "fulfilled" as Jesus was standing in front of Caiphas, the High Priest, soon after which he was crucified. Note, too, the improvised embellishment at the end of the KJV rendition of this verse, "and such as breathe out cruelty", which is not present in the Hebrew text. Since the New Testament predates the KJV, it is reasonable to conclude that the purpose of this added phrase is to enhance the "fulfillment" text, particularly as it concerns what the two witnesses said about Jesus, "This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days".

Conclusion: Psalms 27:12 is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

B. Psalms 31

The *reference list* indicates that Psalms 31 contains two "messianic prophecies" that are "fulfilled" according to the New Testament, as shown in Table III.B-1.

Table III.B-1 – Claimed "Messianic Prophecies" and their "Fulfillments"

Statement	Citations[5]	
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"
The Messiah would cry out "into thy hands I commend my spirit"	Psalms 31:6[5]	Luke 23:46
There would be plots to kill the Messiah	Psalms 31:14[13]	Matthew 27:1

[5] In cases where verse numbers differ between the Hebrew Bible and the Christian "Old Testament", the citation shows the verse number in the Hebrew Bible followed by the verse number in the Christian "Old Testament" in brackets. Example: Psalms 31:6[5].

1. Overview

Following is a summary description of this psalm to help put its context into perspective.

> **FAITH OF THE PERSECUTED: The familiar theme of the straits of the innocent is the *motif* of this Psalm. As a Davidic composition it finds its background in the wilderness of Maon (1 Samuel 23:25). The clause *David made haste to get away* (ibid. 26) is comparable to verse 23 of the Psalm, *I said in my haste*. Some verses, however, are not based on any historical event. These were written for the benefit of anyone who might find himself surrounded by enemies and deem it necessary to reaffirm his belief that God can excuse him from any predicament. This Psalm, like others before it, ends with David's thanks to God for having accepted his supplications.**[6]

The superscription identifies King David as the author of this psalm. He was relentlessly pursued, his whereabouts were betrayed repeatedly, yet God, in His infinite mercy, always rescued him from his enemies. King David realizes that God is the one who has always saved him, and he, therefore, puts his entire faith and trust in Him.

2. Investigating claimed "Messianic Prophecies" [and "Fulfillments"]

a. *The Messiah would cry out "into thy hands I commend my spirit"*

The relevant texts from the King James Version (KJV) "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.B.2.a-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.B.2.a-1 – Psalms 31:6[5] and Luke 23:46

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew
Psalms 31:5	**Luke 23:46**	**Psalms 31:6**
Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.	And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.	In Your hand I entrust my spirit; You have redeemed me, O Lord, God of truth.

What is this spirit to which King David was referring? The spirit is the soul, given to mankind by God:

> **Genesis 2:7 - And the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.**

[6] *Soncino Books of the Bible – The Psalms*, Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, Editor, p. 88, The Soncino Press (1992)

The soul is the animating life or consciousness within mankind and, being the breath, it leaves the body upon death:[7]

> **Ecclesiastes 12:7 - And the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God, Who gave it.** [See also Psalms 146:4 for a similar description.]

In verse 6[5], King David, thankful to God for His past help and for keeping His promises, says that he entrusts his life into God's keeping. This verse does not concern, nor does it describe, the last few moments in King David's life. Quite to the contrary, he speaks of trusting God to continue watching over him for the rest of his life.

By contrast, the "fulfillment" text recounts the scene of Jesus' last breath before expiring on the cross. Unlike what David does in this psalm, Jesus did not express any gratitude for God's mercy in keeping him safe.

In placing King David's words into the mouth of a dying Jesus, the author of the Gospel of Luke created significant problems for Christian theology. *Why would Jesus need to be concerned about what will happen to him after death if he was part of the godhead?* For King David, a mortal human, such a request would be natural, and one could stretch the argument and say that it would even have been natural for Jesus to do this during his lifetime on earth when he prayed like everyone else. But, in the case of Jesus who, according to Christian theology is part of the godhead and, thus, all-knowing, *what is the point of praying for what will happen to him after death? Did he not know what would happen? Did he think, perhaps, that he would not return to being "100% divine" after giving up his "100% human" nature? And, if he was part of the godhead, and his spirit was divine, to whom was he to commit his spirit?*

Another problem for Christian theology arises from what King David said later in this psalm, in a verse that was not selected by Christians as relating to Jesus:

> **Psalms 31:11[10] - For my life is spent in grief and my years in sighing; my strength has failed because of my iniquity, and my bones have withered away.**

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[7] ***QabaLAH*** (Jewish mysticism) teaches that the essence of the soul possesses five manifestations (listed below in ascending level of 'spirituality'):

> ***NEfesh*** (**creature, soul**) - is the first and lowest level of the soul; it is associated with physical vitality.
> ***RU'ah*** (spirit) - is the second level of the soul; it is associated with emotional vitality.
> ***n[e]shaMAH*** (**breath, soul**) – (the 'breath of life' that God breathed into the first man) is the third level of the soul; it is associated with the vitality of intelligence.
> ***haYAH*** (**living being**) - is the second highest level of the soul; it is associated with the awareness of God as continually creating the world.
> ***yehiDAH*** (**a singular one**) - is the highest level of soul; it is associated with being a unity with God, a state that will only manifest itself in the Messianic era.

Suffering is often the consequence of sin, and here King David acknowledges his iniquity. This, then, would have to also apply to Jesus, admitting he is a sinner just as all other mortals are.

Finally, given the fact that the authors of the Four Gospels do not agree on the last words Jesus uttered on the cross,[8] is it not odd that Luke 23:46 was selected as the "fulfillment" text? On what basis can the account in the Gospel of Luke be chosen out of the four as the correct one?

Conclusion: Psalms 31:6[5] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

b. *There would be plots to kill the Messiah*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.B.2.b-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.B.2.b-1 – Psalms 31:14[13] and Matthew 27:1

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 31:13	**Matthew 27:1**	**Psalms 31:14**
For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.	When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death:	For I heard the gossip of many, terror from all sides when they take counsel together against me; they plotted to take my soul.

Numerous accounts of plots being hatched against various individuals, including King David, are present throughout the Hebrew Bible, yet none of these involve מָשִׁיחַ (***mashi'ah***), the **Jewish Messiah**.

The "fulfillment" account claims that such a plot on the life of Jesus was being schemed by the Jewish leaders. Considering the requirements specified in the Hebrew Bible, any individual who may have claimed himself, or may have been declared by others, to be מָשִׁיחַ, and who died prior to completing the "messianic agenda" was a false messiah. Thus, a successful plot to have Jesus killed would disqualify him as the Messiah.

[8] The other three Gospel accounts of the last words of Jesus as he was dying on the cross are:

Matthew 27:46(KJV) - And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
Mark 15:34(KJV) – And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?* which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
John 19:30(KJV) - When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, *It is finished*: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

<u>Conclusion</u>: Psalms 31:14[13] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

C. Psalms 34

The *reference list* indicates that Psalms 34 contains one "messianic prophecy" that is "fulfilled" according to the New Testament, as shown in Table III.C-1.

<u>Table III.C-1</u> – Claimed "Messianic Prophecies" and their "Fulfillments"

Statement	Citations	
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"
None of the Messiah's bones would be broken	Psalms 34:21[20]	John 19:32-33

1. Overview

Following is a summary description of this psalm to help put its context into perspective.

> **HYMN OF PRAISE: An acrostic Psalm resembling 25 in the omission of a verse beginning with *vav* and the addition at the end of a verse with an initial *pe*. The title relates the Psalm to an incident comparable with that narrated in 1 Samuel 21:11ff., where, however, the king's name was Achish, not as stated here, Abimelech. The differences in names might easily be accounted for if Abimelech was a dynastic name or a royal title, like 'Agag' among the Amalekies or 'Pharaoh' in Egypt (Rashi). Alternatively, he might have had two different names (Ibn Ezra). According to the Midrash (Shocher Tov) David, having escaped from the hands of Saul, sought refuge among the Philistines who, in turn, sought to avenge the blood of the slain Goliath. He prayed to God that he should appear a madman and, on account of this, Achish, convinced this was not David, spared his life, driving him away instead. In gratitude to God, David composed this Psalm. By making known his personal experience, he also shows the way to salvation. Two themes are stressed; seeking God (verses 5 and 11) and deliverance from troubles (verses 5, 18 and 20). The last verse, which is included in the acrostic, may have been added so that the Psalm should end on a note of encouragement for the faithful.[9]**

The superscription identifies King David as the author of this psalm, which is an alphabetical hymn (an acrostic formed by the first letter of each verse) in the Hebrew. Unfortunately, the beauty of this acrostic is lost in translation.

2. Investigating claimed "Messianic Prophecies" [and "Fulfillments"]

a. *None of the Messiah's bones would be broken*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.B.2.a-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

[9] <u>*Soncino Books of the Bible – The Psalms*</u>, Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, Editor, p. 99, The Soncino Press (1992)

Table III.C.2.a-1 – **Psalms 34:21[20] and John 19:32-33**

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew
Psalms 34:20	**John 19:32-33**	**Psalm 34:21**
He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.	32. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. 33. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs:	He guards all his bones; not one of them was broken.

Verse 21[20] is a general statement about righteous people, and does not refer to any specific person. This is evident from the preceding verse:

> **Psalms 34 20[19] - Many evils befall the righteous, but the Lord saves him from them all.**

In other words, the subject in verse 21[20] is the "generic" righteous person. The verse speaks of God's servants who will suffer and even be hurt, but will be redeemed and not be broken.

In light of the context of verse 21[20], the "fulfillment" text is a rather odd choice for this alleged "messianic prophecy". Although deliverance is promised in Psalms 34, was Jesus "delivered" even if his bones were not broken? No, the Roman soldiers crucified him. According to Christian theology, the death of Jesus was an expected event, and his deliverance from affliction was not to occur in the first place.

Conclusion: Psalms 34:21[20] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

D. Psalms 35

The *reference list* indicates that Psalms 35 contains two "messianic prophecies" that are "fulfilled" according to the New Testament, as shown in Table III.D-1.

Table III.D-1 – **Claimed "Messianic Prophecies" and their "Fulfillments"**

Statement	Citations	
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"
The Messiah would be accused by false witnesses	Psalms 35:11	Mark 14:55-59
The Messiah would be hated by many without cause	Psalms 35:19	John 18:19-23

1. Overview

Following is a summary description of this psalm to help put its context into perspective.

> **PRAYER WHILE UNDER PERSECUTION: This Psalm should be compared with [Psalms] 7 and 22. It is a cry of distress from David when he was being hunted by**

Saul (Kimchi), or while fleeing from his rebellious son Absalom (Sforno). Two subjects of his distress are made clear. He is held guilty for crimes he never committed (verses 7 and 11) and he bemoans the fact that the good ha has done is being repaid with bad (verse 12).[10]

The superscription identifies King David as the author of this psalm. This, once again, is a prayerful psalm wherein King David appeals to God for help against those who have been persecuting him.

2. Investigating claimed "Messianic Prophecies" [and "Fulfillments"]

a. *The Messiah would be accused by false witnesses*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.D.2.a-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.D.2.a-1 – Psalms 35:11 and Mark 14:55-59

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 35:11	**Mark 14:55-59**	**Psalms 35:11**
False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not.	55. And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none. 56. For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together. 57. And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, 58. We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. 59. But neither so did their witness agree together.	False witnesses rise up; they ask me of things that I know not.

As was already noted for Psalms 27:12, King David was the target and victim of many slander campaigns. Here he points out that, using false witnesses, people falsely claimed that he owed them various goods.

The "fulfillment" text attempts to match the testimony of false witnesses against Jesus before the Sanhedrin with King David's account of false witnesses who testified against him. However, the contexts of this alleged "messianic prophecy" and "fulfillment" pair are unrelated.

[10] Soncino Books of the Bible – The Psalms, Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, Editor, p. 103, The Soncino Press (1992)

Conclusion: Psalms 35:11 is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

b. *The Messiah would be hated by many without cause*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.D.2.b-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.D.2.b-1 – Psalms 35:19 and John 18:19-23

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 35:19	**John 18:19-23**	**Psalms 35:19**
Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me: neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause.	19. The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. 20. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. 21. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. 22. And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? 23. Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?	Let them not rejoice over me, those who are my enemies for an unjust cause, neither shall those who hate me for naught wink their eyes.

King David is pleading with God to not let those who are his enemies without a just cause for enmity, and who invent lies about him, gain any pleasure or joy from their actions.

The "fulfillment" text, here too, attempts to connect King David's plight with the scene of Jesus standing before the Sanhedrin, being questioned by the high priest, and then being struck by one of the officers when he seemed to respond evasively to the questions. No such scene or imagery is ever described in the Hebrew Bible with regard to מָשִׁיחַ.

Conclusion: Psalms 35:19 is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

E. Psalms 38

The *reference list* indicates that Psalms 38 contains one "messianic prophecy" that is "fulfilled" according to the New Testament, as shown in Table III.E-1.

Table III.E-1 – **Claimed "Messianic Prophecies" and their "Fulfillments"**

Statement	Citations	
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"
The Messiah would be silent before his accusers	Psalms 38:14-15[13-14]	Matthew 26:62-63

1. Overview

Following is a summary description of this psalm to help put its context into perspective.

> **A PENITENT'S PRAYER: The analogy with Psalm 6 will at once occur to the reader. The speaker is afflicted with pain and his physical condition causes him searching of heart. He acknowledges that his sufferings are the effect of sin. He therefore offers his prayer in a deeply repentant spirit. David well knew the emotional and physical tribulations that those striving for perfection can undergo. Rashi and others interpret the Psalm as referring to the nation, though the personal note is strongly marked throughout.**[11]

The superscription identifies King David as the author of this psalm. King David reminds the reader that punishment for sin can manifest itself as suffering, even at the hands of friends, and that God is the one who provides salvation to the repentant sinner.

2. Investigating claimed "Messianic Prophecies" [and "Fulfillments"]

a. *The Messiah would be silent before his accusers*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.E.2.a-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.E.2.a-1 – **Psalms 38:14:15[13-14] and Matthew 26:62-63**

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew
Psalms 38:13-14	Matthew 26:62-63	Psalms 38:14-15
13. But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth. 14. Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs.	62. And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? 63. But Jesus held his peace, And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.	14. But I am as a deaf person, I do not hear, and like a mute, who does not open his mouth. 15. And I was as a man who does not understand and in whose mouth are no arguments.

[11] *Soncino Books of the Bible – The Psalms*, Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, Editor, p. 117, The Soncino Press (1992)

King David describes how he did not respond nor pay heed to the accusations leveled against him by his enemies.

The "fulfillment" text attempts to connect King David's silence to the charges by his accusers with the silence of Jesus before the Sanhedrin, where he is accused of blasphemy. Clearly, the circumstances of these two situations do not match. More importantly, the creator of this alleged "messianic prophecy" and "fulfillment" pair either did not read the entire psalm, or decided to ignore several important statements by King David:

> **Psalms 38:4-5,19[3-4,18] – (4) There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your fury; there is no peace in my bones because of my sin. (5) For my iniquities passed over my head; as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. (19) For I admit my iniquity; I worry about my sin.**

In other words, by attributing part of this psalm to Jesus, the entire psalm would have to apply to him as well, since there is only one speaker in this psalm. This means that, just as King David admits to being a sinner, Jesus had to be a sinner as well!

Conclusion: Psalms 38:14-15[13-14] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

IV. SUMMARY

In this second in a series of essays on so-called "proof texts" in the Psalms, eight such texts from Psalms 27, 31, 34, 35, and 38, which are claimed to be Christian "messianic prophecies", along with their respective "fulfillment" texts from the New Testament, were investigated. The analysis addressed content, context, and correspondence between each pair of texts, in order to assess the validity of the claims. Cumulative results for all "messianic prophecy" and “fulfillment" pairs examined thus far are summarized in Table IV-1. [Note: Results from the earlier essays are shown in a darker highlight, and current results are shown in a lighter highlight.]

Table IV-1 – Claimed "messianic prophecies" in Psalms 8, 16, 18, 27, 31, 3+4, 35, and 38, and their "fulfillments"

Statement	Citations		Valid?
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
Infants would give praise to the Messiah	Psalms 8:3[2]	Matthew 21:16	NO
The Messiah would be given authority over all things	Psalms 8:7[6]	Matthew 28:18	NO
The Messiah would be resurrected	Psalms 16:8-10a	Matthew 28:6	NO
The Messiah's body would not be subject to decay	Psalms 16:8-10b	Acts 13:35-37	NO
The Messiah would be exalted to the presence of God	Psalms 16:11	Acts 2:25-33	NO
The Messiah would come for all people	Psalms 18:50[49]	Ephesians 3:4-6	NO
The Messiah's enemies would stumble and fall	Psalms 27:2	John 18:3-6	NO

when they came for him			
The Messiah would be accused by false witnesses	Psalms 27:12	Matthew 26:59-61	**NO**
None of the Messiah's bones would be broken	Psalms 34:21[20]	John 19:32-33	**NO**
There would be plots to kill the Messiah	Psalms 31:14[13]	Matthew 27:1	**NO**
There would be plots to kill the Messiah	Psalms 31:14[13]	Matthew 27:1	**NO**
The Messiah would be accused by false witnesses	Psalms 35:11	Mark 14:55-59	**NO**
The Messiah would be hated by many without cause	Psalms 35:19	John 18:19-23	**NO**
The Messiah would be silent before his accusers	Psalms 38:14-15[13-14]	Matthew 26:62-63	**NO**

As the sample of claimed Christian "messianic prophecy" and "fulfillment" pairs grows, two patterns emerge: First, these texts are not valid "messianic prophecies". Second, their focus is on Jesus, the central figure in the Christian messianic vision, not on the conditions that will prevail in the world due to his accomplishments.

Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms[1]
Part 3 - Psalms 40, 41, 45

I. Introduction

This is the third in a series of essays in which claims by Christian missionaries concerning "messianic prophecies" in the Psalms are investigated. The first two essays covered the 14 claimed "messianic prophecies" in Psalms 8, 16, 18, 27, 31, 35, and 38.[2,3]

This essay investigates nine additional claims of “messianic prophecies” in the Christian “Old Testament” and their respective accounts of “fulfillment” in the New Testament, all of which are taken from the same ***reference list*** that was previously used.[4]

II. "Messianic Prophecy": Comparing Christian and Jewish Perspectives

This was covered in detail in Section II in the first essay of this series (please see footnote 2) and will not be repeated in this and the remaining essays.

III. Analysis of Claimed "Messianic Prophecies" and their "Fulfillments"

To say that a prophecy has been fulfilled means that the foretold event, condition, or situation has happened, and that one needs no longer await its completion or fulfillment. On the other hand, a prophecy that has not yet happened, or is yet to be completed, remains a prophecy not fulfilled.

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:
- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as “h̲”
  - The letter כ is transliterated as “ch”
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as “k”
  - The letter ק is transliterated as “q”
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted “e” following the consonant
  - There is no “doubling” of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

[2] *Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms, Part 1 – Psalms 8, 16, 18 -* http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt1.pdf

[3] *Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms, Part 2 – Psalms 27, 31, 34, 35, 38 -* http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt2.pdf

[4] *Jesus is the Messiah: The Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled By Jesus Christ Ordered by Category -* http://contenderministries.org/prophecy/jesusmessiah2.php

The "messianic prophecies" claimed to be present in Psalms 40, 41, and 45, along with the respective accounts of their "fulfillment" from the New Testament, are addressed in this essay. The analysis aims to determine whether any of these pairs of passages in the Christian "Old Testament" and New Testament qualify as a "messianic prophecy" and its "fulfillment", respectively.

A. Psalms 40

The *reference list* indicates that Psalms 40 contains four "messianic prophecies" that are "fulfilled" according to the New Testament, as shown in Table III.A-1.

Table III.A-1 – Claimed "Messianic Prophecies" and their "Fulfillments"

Statement	Citations[5]	
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"
The Messiah's offering of himself would replace all sacrifices	Psalms 40:7-9a[6-8a]	Hebrews 10:10-13
The Messiah would say the scriptures were written of him	Psalms 40:7-9b[6-8b]	Luke 24:44
The Messiah would come to do God's will	Psalms 40:8-9[7-8]	John 5:30
The Messiah would not conceal his mission from the congregation	Psalms 40:10-11[9-10]	Luke 4:16-21

1. Overview

Following is a summary description of this psalm to help put its context into perspective.

PRAISE AND PRAYER: A distinct break occurs at the end of verse 12. The first part consists of a hymn of praise for past deliverance, while the second is a petition for aid in present danger. David is confident, however that God will deliver him as in the past. He points out that he has always striven to apply his own understanding of God's ways for purposes of spiritual ennoblement as well as for edification of his people. Thus, while in the midst of his suffering, he is filled with Divine inspiration (Hirsch). A notable feature is that verses 14-18 appear separately as Ps 70.[6]

The superscription identifies King David as the author of this psalm. He describes how his trust in God has been rewarded. King David explains that gratitude is best displayed by obeying the Torah, and how he has proclaimed God's wonders in public testimony. He pleads for God's continued help and protection.

[5] In cases where verse numbers differ between the Hebrew Bible and the Christian "Old Testament", the citation shows the verse number in the Hebrew Bible followed by the verse number in the Christian "Old Testament" in brackets. Example: Psalms 40:7-9a[6-8a].

[6] *Soncino Books of the Bible – The Psalms*, Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, Editor, p. 123, The Soncino Press (1992)

2. Investigating claimed "Messianic Prophecies" [and "Fulfillments"]

a. *The Messiah's offering of himself would replace all sacrifices*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.A.2.a-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.A.2.a-1 – Psalms 40:7-9a[6-8a] and Hebrews 10:10-13

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 40:6-8a	**Hebrews 10:10-13**	**Psalms 40:7-9a**
6. Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. 7. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, 8. I delight to do thy will, [O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.]	10. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 11. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: 12. But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; 13. From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.	7. You desired neither sacrifice nor meal offering; You dug ears for me; a burnt offering or a sin offering You did not request. 8. Then I said, "Behold I have come," with a scroll of a book written for me. 9. O God, I desired to do Your will [and ([to have) Your law within my innards.]

In this passage, King David could be answering the question: *How can I thank you, God, for Your wondrous deeds of mercy for me?* He takes a cue from the Prophet Samuel, who said the following to King Saul as part of a rebuke for not obeying God's command to annihilate Amalek (Deuteronomy 25:17-19):

> **1Samuel 15:22 - And Samuel said, "Has the Lord (as much) desire in burnt offerings and peace-offerings, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than a peace offering; to hearken (is better) than the fat of rams.**

God does not desire sacrifices and offerings as much as He wants people to obey the Torah. By forming ears for mankind, He has made it possible for people to hear and to listen to the instructions ("**… All that the Lord spoke we will do and we will hear.**" [Exodus 24:7]). King David does not say that sacrifices are contrary to divine ordinance, or that someone will be the last and final sacrifice. He simply states what is preferred by God.

The choice of the "fulfillment" text may seem odd unless one reads the entire tenth chapter in the Letter to the Hebrews, the first 18 verses of which deal with the notion that the sacrificial death of Jesus was sufficient for all times. The verses leading up to the "fulfillment" text set the stage:

> **<u>Hebrews 10:5-9(KJV)</u> – (5) Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, *but a body hast thou prepared me*: (6) In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. (7) Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. (8) Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; (9) Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.**

Compare the phrase "***but a body hast thou prepared me***" in the above passage with the phrase "**mine ears hast thou opened**" in the "messianic prophecy". This is how the author of the Letter to the Hebrews altered the original passage in order to introduce his doctrine, that Jesus was the last and final sacrifice, and that his death put an end to the sacrificial system commanded in the Torah.[7] *On whose authority did the author of the Letter to the Hebrews abolish the sacrificial system prescribed in the Torah?*

By placing King David's words from this psalm in the mouth of Jesus, the author of the Letter to the Hebrews created another serious problem for Christian theology. Just four verses beyond the passage claimed to be the "messianic prophecy", King David says the following:

> **<u>Psalms 40:13[12]</u> - For countless evils have encompassed me; my iniquities have overtaken me and I could not see [them because] they are more numerous than the hairs of my head, and my heart has forsaken me.**

King David confessed to his many sins. Christian missionaries ignore this verse because it makes Jesus a sinner, which would disqualify him from being the "unblemished sacrificial offering" he is claimed to be.

<u>Conclusion</u>: Psalms 40:7-9a[6-8a] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

b. *The Messiah would say the scriptures were written of him*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.A.2.b-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

[7] For an analysis of this Christian doctrine, see the essay *<u>A Knock-Out Punch: The "Last and Final Sacrifice" Takes the Ten-Count</u>* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/JCSacrifice.pdf

<u>Table III.A.2.b-1</u> – Psalms 40:7-9b[6-8b] and Luke 24:44

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew
Psalms 40:6-8b	Luke 24:44	Psalms 40:7-9b
6. Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. 7. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, 8. I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.	And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.	7. You desired neither sacrifice nor meal offering; You dug ears for me; a burnt offering or a sin offering You did not request. 8. Then I said, "Behold I have come," with a scroll of a book written for me. 9. O God, I desired to do Your will and (to have) Your law within my innards.

Once his ears had been opened and he was able to hear and understand God's message, King David, holding a Scroll of the Torah, declared his readiness to joyfully do God's will.

The Hebrew inflected preposition עָלָי (***a*****LAI**) appears in the Hebrew text of verse 8, and is rendered as "for me" in the Jewish translation. While this preposition is used in several different ways throughout the Hebrew Bible, with meanings such as **about me**, **against me**, **for me**, **of me**, **on me**, and more, depending on the grammatical syntax of a passage, the relevant meaning must be gleaned from the context. The KJV generally renders this term properly on its more than 200 instances, including the cases where it means **for me**, as the following example demonstrates:

> **<u>Psalms 57:3</u> - I will call upon the Most High God, upon the God Who completes [what He promised] for me [עָלָי].**
>
> **<u>Psalms 57:2(KJV)</u> - I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me.** [Other examples in the KJV include: 1Samuel 22:8; Esther 4:16.]

Yet, in the case of Psalms 40:8[9], the KJV has "of me" for עָלָי, which does not fit with the true context of the passage in the Hebrew text. Rather, this particular rendition appears to have been selected because it enhances the relevance of the "fulfillment" text. Namely, it enables the subject to say that "the book" is written about him. The very fact that the "fulfillment" text conveys the words of Jesus himself is supposed to lend credibility to the New Testament as proof that the Torah, Prophets, and Psalms were all written about him.

In the correct reading of this passage, King David has in mind the Torah, which was written **for him** to obey, not Scripture written **of** or **concerning him**.

<u>Conclusion</u>: Psalms 40:7-9b[6-8b] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

c. *The Messiah would come to do God's will*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.A.2.c-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

<u>Table III.A.2.c-1</u> – Psalms 40:8-9[7-8] and John 5:30

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew
Psalms 40:7-8	John 5:30	Psalms 40:8-9
7. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, 8. I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.	I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.	8. Then I said, "Behold I have come," with a scroll of a book written for me. 9. O God, I desired to do Your will and [to have] Your law within my innards.

It is true that מָשִׁיחַ (***mashi'ah***) will obey God's Torah and do His will. However, this is King David speaking for himself and, perhaps, giving a lesson to the Jewish people.

The choice of "fulfillment" text is rather odd since it portrays Jesus ("the Son" in the triune godhead) as subservient to, and lower than, God ("the Father" in the triune godhead), and that he is unable to do anything on his own – he can only execute the will of "the Father". Yet, according to Christian theology, all "persons" in the triune godhead are coequals. These two scenarios cannot both be true.

<u>Conclusion</u>: Psalms 40:8-9[7-8] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

d. *The Messiah would not conceal his mission from the congregation*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.A.2.d-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

<u>Table III.A.2.d-1</u> – Psalms 40:10-11[9-10] and Luke 4:16-21

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew
Psalms 40:9-10	**Luke 4:16-21**	**Psalms 40:10-11**
9. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest. 10. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.	16. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. 17. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, 18. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, 19. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. 20. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.	10. I brought tidings of righteousness in a great assembly. Behold, I will not withhold my lips, O Lord, You know. 11. I did not conceal Your charity within my heart; I stated Your faith and Your salvation - I did not withhold Your kindness and truth - to a great assembly.

Not merely satisfied with receiving God's mercy, King David desires to share his experience with the people through his public testimony, hoping to influence others to recognize it as well. He proclaims God's attributes of righteousness, faithfulness, mercy, and truth to his people, Israel.

Will מָשִׁיחַ be doing this? Perhaps; though, according to the Hebrew Bible, there will be a universal knowledge of God in the messianic era, so that מָשִׁיחַ will not have to convince others.

Without careful scrutiny, the "fulfillment" text could appear to be suitable. The Hebrew text of verse 10 in the passage contains the phrase קָהָל רָב (***qa**HAL **RAV***), meaning **a large crowd**, **a large assembly of people, a multitude of people**. This phrase occurs seven times in the Hebrew Bible – at Ezekiel 17:17, 38:4; Psalms 22:26[25], 35:18, 40:10[9],11[10]; Ezra 10:1). The KJV consistently and properly renders this phrase as **[a/the] great congregation** and **[a/the] great company**.

According to the "fulfillment" text, the event takes place on the Sabbath at a synagogue in Nazareth.[8] The problem with this scenario is that, in spite

[8] Luke 4 was analyzed in the essay, *"Use the Source, Luke!" [Luke 4:16-21]* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Luke4.pdf

of the extensive archaeological investigations of the region, remains of a synagogue from the Second Temple period have yet to be discovered in the area where Christian tradition holds that Nazareth stood. Yet, several synagogues of that era were excavated in other parts of the Galilee (e.g., in *GAmla* and *KFAR NaHUM* [called “Capernaum” in the New Testament]) and, given their size, it is doubtful that a typical Sabbath crowd at a synagogue can be characterized as "a great congregation".

It is also interesting that only a few verses beyond the "fulfillment" text, Jesus declared that the congregants were unworthy of seeing him perform miracles. According to the author of the Gospel of Luke, these remarks enraged the crowd to such a degree that they wanted to kill him:

> **Luke 4:28-31(KJV) – (28) And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, (29) And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. (30) But he passing through the midst of them went his way, (31) And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days.**

The author of the "fulfillment" text fails to “connect” Jesus and his actions with the enthusiasm shown by King David in his desire to tell the people about God's greatness.

Conclusion: Psalms 40:10-11[9-10] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

B. Psalms 41

The *reference list* indicates that Psalms 41 contains one "messianic prophecy" that is "fulfilled" according to the New Testament, as shown in Table III.B-1.

Table III.B-1 – Claimed "Messianic Prophecies" and their "Fulfillments"

Statement	Citations	
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"
The Messiah's betrayer would be a friend whom he broke bread with	Psalms 41:10[9]	Mark 14:17-18

1. Overview

Following is a summary description of this psalm to help put its context into perspective.

> **A SUFFERER'S PRAYER: Another Psalm relating to a time when physical suffering was aggravated by mental uneasiness over the machinations of enemies. In particular one man whom he considered a close friend had proved traitorous. His main objective is not to complain about his physical suffering, but to ensure that his enemies receive their due for their treachery. It is not clear whether the Psalm was composed during an illness and the opening verses were said in the**

hope of a happier future, or if it was written later as a narrative of what had occurred in the past. This Psalm constitutes the climax to the first book of PSALMS and it is for this reason that the final verse takes the form of an appreciation to God for accepting the prayer of the Psalmist.[9]

The superscription identifies King David as the author of this psalm. His overall message here is that, even in circumstances that appear to be hopeless, a person can become aware of God's love and mercy by contemplating the suffering of the sick, the poor, and the persecuted.

2. Investigating claimed "Messianic Prophecies" [and "Fulfillments"]

a. *The Messiah's betrayer would be a friend whom he broke bread with*

The relevant texts from the King James Version (KJV) "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.B.2.a-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.B.2.a-1 – Psalms 41:10[9] and Mark 14:17-18

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 41:9	**Mark 14:17-18**	**Psalms 41:10**
Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.	17. And in the evening he cometh with the twelve. 18. And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me.	Even my ally, in whom I trusted, who eats my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.

King David spoke of someone, who remains unnamed, a trusted friend with whom he had a close relationship, who eventually attempted to trip him up. He could have had in mind Joab (*Yo'AV*), his military commander-in-chief, who betrayed him by supporting David's oldest surviving son, Adonijah (*AdoniYAH*), when he declared himself as the next king of Israel (1Kings 1:5-8). He also could have thought of Ahitophel (*A<u>h</u>iTOfel*), a chief advisor who betrayed him when he conspired with Absalom (*AvshaLOM*), another one of David's sons, in his rebellion (2Samuel 15:31, 16:21-17:3). King David expressed his gratitude to God for foiling all those plots.

The author of the "fulfillment" text has put King David's words into the mouth of Jesus while he was at the Last Supper with his disciples where, according to the accounts in the New Testament, he foretold that Judas Iscariot would betray him.

Once again, this scenario creates problems for Christian theology. The stories about the betrayal of King David by a close associate and the

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[9] <u>*Soncino Books of the Bible – The Psalms*</u>, Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, Editor, p. 127, The Soncino Press (1992)

betrayal of Jesus by Judas differ significantly. According to King David's account, the plot against him was unsuccessful, whereas the New Testament describes how the betrayal by Judas succeeded and led to the crucifixion of Jesus.

There is also the question of how an act can be seen as a betrayal if it was preordained, as described in the New Testament. Also, knowing that Judas was just an agent in the "master plan" of Christianity, why would Jesus so angrily condemn him?

Moreover, as was also the case with several of the psalms previously investigated, whoever created this "messianic prophecy" and "fulfillment" pair apparently ignored the rest of the psalm. This is what King David says just before he begins to describe the malice of his enemies:

> **Psalms 41:5[4] - I said, "O Lord, be gracious to me; heal my soul because I have sinned against You."**

King David confesses that he has sinned against God and asks that his soul be healed through the forgiveness of his sins. The consequence of attributing verse 10[9] to Jesus is that verse 5[4] must also be applicable to him, i.e., that Jesus admitted he was a sinner.

Conclusion: Psalms 41:10[9] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

C. Psalms 45

The *reference list* indicates that Psalms 45 contains four "messianic prophecies" that are "fulfilled" according to the New Testament, as shown in Table III.C-1.

Table III.C-1 – Claimed "Messianic Prophecies" and their "Fulfillments"

Statement	Citations	
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"
The Messiah would speak with a message of grace	Psalms 45:3[2]	Luke 4:22
The Messiah's throne would be everlasting	Psalms 45:7-8a[6-7a]	Luke 1:31-33
The Messiah would be God	Psalms 45:7-8b[6-7b]	Hebrews 1:8-9
The Messiah would act with righteousness	Psalms 45:7-8c[6-7c]	John 5:30

1. Overview

Following is a summary description of this psalm to help put its context into perspective.

> **A 'ROYAL MARRIAGE' SONG: At first glance this composition seems to be no more than a wedding song, celebrating the marriage of a king to his princess, containing praise for the groom, and exhortation to the bride, and a prayer for the happiness of the union. Several profound interpretations have been ascribed to the Psalm. Ibn Ezra understands the 'king' as referring to David or, as Targum and Kimchi, to the Messiah, and the 'marriage' as an allusion to his redemption of**

Israel. Rashi explains the song as dedicated to Torah scholars who are acclaimed as kings (Prov. 8:15; [B. Talmud, Tractate] Gittin 62a). The scholar's partner is the nation of Israel who, to survive, must heed the words of its elders who are its true spiritual leaders. According to Malbim, the 'king' is the mind and the soul that rule the rest of the body. The 'queen' represents the senses which must be trained to accept instructions from the brain that is their 'master' (verse 12) and knows how best to utilize the various parts of the body for good.[10]

The superscription attributes this psalm to the "Sons of Korah", who were either the immediate sons of this rebellious person (Numbers 16), and who were spared from death (Numbers 26:11), or they were later descendants. As Levites, they composed several other psalms.[11]

This is the first of the psalms being investigated in this series of essays, which some Jewish Sages have interpreted as messianic text, though historical interpretations have also been put forth by others.

2. Investigating claimed "Messianic Prophecies" [and "Fulfillments"]

a. *The Messiah would speak with a message of grace*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.C.2.a-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.C.2.a-1 – Psalms 45:3[2] and Luke 4:22

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 45:2	**Luke 4:22**	**Psalms 45:3**
Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.	And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?	You are more handsome than [other] men; charm is poured into your lips. Therefore, God blessed you forever.

In applying these descriptions to מָשִׁיחַ, Targum Yonathan and others describe him as being above the common person in his conduct, and that he will be endowed with the gift of prophecy.

The "fulfillment" text describes the reaction of the Sabbath crowd to the first part of what Jesus said in the Synagogue. Shortly thereafter, however, when his "gracious words" turned into a condemnation, the congregants became so enraged that they wanted to kill him (see the last "messianic prophecy" in Psalms 40 above).

[10] *Soncino Books of the Bible – The Psalms*, Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, Editor, p. 140, The Soncino Press (1992)
[11] The psalms and songs attributed to the "Sons of Korah" are: Psalms 42, 44-49, 84, 85, 87, and 88.

Did Jesus really have a message of grace? Consider the following quotes from the Gospels, which allegedly were his words:

> **Matthew 10:34-37(KJV) – (34) Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. (35) For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. (36) And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. (37) He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.**
>
> **Luke 14:26-27(KJV) – (26) If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. (27) And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.**
>
> **Luke 19:27(KJV) - But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.**

It seems that a heavy "price" is exacted for the "grace" of Jesus. Compare this with a dictionary definition of the theological aspect of “grace”:

> **grace … 7.** *Theol.* **a.** Divine love and protection bestowed freely upon mankind. **b.** The state of being protected or sanctified by the favor of God. **c.** An excellence or power granted by God.[12]

Can one honestly say that Jesus delivered a message of grace?

Conclusion: Psalms 45:3[2] may be a valid "messianic prophecy", though it remains unfulfilled.

b. *The Messiah's throne would be everlasting*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.C.2.b-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

[12] *The American Heritage Dictionary*, Second College Edition, p. 570, Houghton Mifflin Company (1991).

<u>Table III.C.2.b-1</u> – Psalms 45:7-8a[6-7a] and Luke 1:31-33

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 45:6-7a	**Luke 1:31-33**	**Psalms 45:7-8a**
6. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. 7. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: [therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows:]	31. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. 32. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: 33. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.	7. Your throne [of] God [is] forever and ever; the scepter of equity is the scepter of your kingdom. 8. You loved righteousness and you hated wickedness; [therefore God, your God, anointed you with oil of joy from among your peers.]

The opening phrase in the Hebrew text of verse 7, כִּסְאֲךָ אֱלֹהִים (***kis'aCHA eloHIM***), is treated differently by Jewish and Christian translators. Jewish translators generally render this phrase as "**Your throne [of] God**" (as above), or "**Your divine throne**", or "**Your throne is (the throne of) God**", or "**Your throne, O judge**",[13] where the reference is to persons who are, or will be, occupying a certain throne. The common rendition of this phrase by Christian translators is "**Thy throne, O God**", referring to the throne occupied by God. Clearly, these diverse views cannot both be correct.

As noted in the "Overview" of Psalms 45, it is a royal wedding hymn, for which Jewish Sages have proposed several interpretations. Some consider the bridegroom literally a mortal king in his role as a ruler, one who can be either a historical figure or the promised מָשִׁיחַ; others view the bridegroom as a metaphor for something else. Yet, all these different interpretations are consistent with the context of the psalm.

The Hebrew Bible contains references to a "seat" or "throne" that is exclusively and unambiguously that of God, e.g., Isaiah 6:1, Psalms 11:4, 47:9, 89:15, 97:2, 2Chronicles 18:18, among others. There are also two instances in the Hebrew Bible of the phrase כִּסֵּא יהוה (***kisE Y-H-V-H***), **the throne of the Lord**. One is at Jeremiah 3:17, where it is a name by which Jerusalem will be known in the messianic era. The other is in the following passage:

> **<u>1Chronicles 29:23</u> - And Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord [כִּסֵּא יהוה] as king instead of David his father, and he prospered, and all Israel obeyed him.**

This shows that Solomon occupied his father's throne, one that was established by God, but was not God's own "seat" or "throne". In His

[13] For example, "elohim" refers to judges at Psalms 82:6.

promise to King David, God said that He will establish the eternal (Davidic) throne with him and continue it through his son Solomon:[14]

> **2Samuel 7:12-13,16 – (12) When your days are fulfilled, and you shall lie with your forefathers, then I will raise up your seed that shall issue from your body after you, and I will establish his kingdom. (13) He shall build a house for My Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.**
> **(16) And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you; your throne shall be established forever.**

The annotated outline of Psalms 45 shown below helps to demonstrate that the Christian rendition is in error:

- ✡ **Verse 1 – Superscription [dedication, instructions, nature of psalm]**
- ✡ **Verse 2[1] – Prelude [author speaking of himself]**
- ✡ **Verse 3-10[2-9] – Praise of the bridegroom [written in terms of 2nd-person, singular, masculine gender conjugated verbs and inflected nouns]**
- ✡ **Verse 11-13[10-12] – Address to the bride [written in terms of 2nd-person, singular, feminine gender conjugated verbs and inflected nouns]**
- ✡ **Verse 14-16[13-15] – Description of the bride [written in terms of 3rd-person, singular, feminine gender conjugated verbs and inflected nouns]**
- ✡ **Verse 17-18[16-17] – Concluding address to the bridegroom [written in terms of 2nd-person, singular, masculine gender conjugated verbs and inflected nouns]**

Verse 7[6] is in the midst of a passage that refers either to an earthly person or, metaphorically, to earthly things. Consider the very next verse:

> **Psalms 45:8 – You loved righteousness and you hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, anointed you with oil of joy from among your peers.**

> **Psalms 45:7(KJV) – Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows:**

Consequently, the Christian translation of this verse, according to which it is about God, is ruled out.

The author of the "fulfillment" text attempts to connect Jesus, allegedly divine by virtue of being conceived of the Holy Spirit, with the throne of his "father" David. *How could Jesus be of the line of King David if he was fathered by the Holy Spirit?* According to the Hebrew Bible, which was the Scripture in force during the lifetime of Jesus and for years after his death, tribal pedigree is passed exclusively from a father to his male progeny. There also is no evidence in the New Testament, or in recorded history, that Jesus ever sat on any throne as a ruler of an earthly kingdom.

[14] The biblical account that confirm this are: 1 Kings 8:15-20, 1 Chronicles 17:11-15, 22:9-10, 28:3-7

<u>Conclusion</u>: Psalms 45:7-8a[6-7a] may be a valid "messianic prophecy", though it remains unfulfilled.

c. *The Messiah would be God*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.C.2.c-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

<u>Table III.C.2.c-1</u> – Psalms 45:7-8b[6-7b] and Hebrews 1:8-9

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 45:6-7b	**Hebrews 1:8-9**	**Psalms 45:7-8b**
6. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. 7. [Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness:] therefore God, [thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows].	8. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. 9. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.	7. Your throne [of] God [is] forever and ever; the scepter of equity is the scepter of your kingdom. 8. [You loved righteousness and you hated wickedness;] therefore God, [your God, anointed you with oil of joy from among your peers].

What is the context of verse 8[7]? In verse 2[1] the psalmist declares that his composition conveys his thoughts about an unnamed king. In the passage that follows, verses 3[2]-10[9], the psalmist directs his remarks at this king, and uses 2nd-person, singular, masculine gender conjugations of verbs and inflexions of nouns throughout. The psalmist is the speaker in verse 8[7], where he tells the king that, because of his (the king's) righteousness, his (the king's) God selected him for this leadership role.

The "fulfillment" text is in the midst of a collection of misquoted passages from the Christian "Old Testament", which the author of the Letter to the Hebrews attempts to represent as God ["the Father"] speaking of His "Son" and declaring his divinity with his opening phrase of verse 8. "**But unto the Son he saith**". In addition to this being a non-Biblical concept, and regardless of the context of the "fulfillment" text, a correct reading of the passage in Psalms 45 does not convey the idea that מָשִׁיחַ is divine, an idea that would contradict what the Hebrew Bible teaches.

<u>Conclusion</u>: Psalms 45:7-8b[6-7b] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

d. *The Messiah would act with righteousness*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.C.2.d-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.C.2.d-1 – Psalms 45:7-8b[6-7b] and John 5:30

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 45:6-7c	**John 5:30**	**Psalms 45:7-8c**
6. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. 7. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.	I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.	7. Your throne [of] God [is] forever and ever; the scepter of equity is the scepter of your kingdom. 8. You loved righteousness and you hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, anointed you with oil of joy from among your peers.

It is taught in the Hebrew Bible that, as a spiritual leader and Torah authority, מָשִׁיחַ will be a righteous man (e.g., Isaiah 11:5; Jeremiah 23:5).

The "fulfillment" text is the same as used for Psalms 40:8-9[7-8], and the same issue applies here as well. *How can "God the Son" not act except as commanded by "God the Father"? Are they not coequal parts of the triune godhead?*

Was Jesus righteous? As was noted in several of the previous "messianic prophecy" and "fulfillment" pairs that, by applying King David's words to Jesus, it would also follow that he was a sinner. Moreover, accounts in the Four Gospels demonstrate that Jesus did not adhere to the Laws of Moses, and that he never repented.[15] Therefore, Jesus was not righteous.

Conclusion: Psalms 45:7-8c[6-7c] may be a valid "messianic prophecy", though it remains unfulfilled.

IV. Summary

In this third in a series of essays on so-called "proof texts" in the Psalms, nine such texts from Psalms 40, 41, and 45, which are claimed to be Christian "messianic prophecies", along with their respective "fulfillment" texts from the New Testament, were investigated. The analysis addressed content, context, and correspondence between each pair of texts, in order to assess the validity of the claims. Cumulative results of all "messianic prophecy" and "fulfillment" pairs investigated thus far are

[15] This is discussed in the essay *Sinless Jesus?* – http://thejewishhome.org/counter/SinlessJC.pdf

summarized in Table IV-1. [Note: Results from the earlier essays are shown in a darker highlight, and current results are shown in a lighter highlight.]

Table IV-1 – Claimed "messianic prophecies" in Psalms 8, 16, 18, 27, 31, 34, 35, 38, 40, 41, and 45, and their "fulfillments"

Statement	Citations		Valid?[16]	
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"		
Infants would give praise to the Messiah	Psalms 8:3[2]	Matthew 21:16	NO	
The Messiah would be given authority over all things	Psalms 8:7[6]	Matthew 28:18	NO	
The Messiah would be resurrected	Psalms 16:8-10a	Matthew 28:6	NO	
The Messiah's body would not be subject to decay	Psalms 16:8-10b	Acts 13:35-37	NO	
The Messiah would be exalted to the presence of God	Psalms 16:11	Acts 2:25-33	NO	
The Messiah would come for all people	Psalms 18:50[49]	Ephesians 3:4-6	NO	
The Messiah's enemies would stumble and fall when they came for him	Psalms 27:2	John 18:3-6	NO	
The Messiah would be accused by false witnesses	Psalms 27:12	Matthew 26:59-61	NO	
None of the Messiah's bones would be broken	Psalms 34:21[20]	John 19:32-33	NO	
There would be plots to kill the Messiah	Psalms 31:14[13]	Matthew 27:1	NO	
There would be plots to kill the Messiah	Psalms 31:14[13]	Matthew 27:1	NO	
The Messiah would be accused by false witnesses	Psalms 35:11	Mark 14:55-59	NO	
The Messiah would be hated by many without cause	Psalms 35:19	John 18:19-23	NO	
The Messiah would be silent before his accusers	Psalms 38:14-15[13-14]	Matthew 26:62-63	NO	
The Messiah's offering of himself would replace all sacrifices	Psalms 40:7-9a[6-8a]	Hebrews 10:10-13	NO	
The Messiah would say the scriptures were written of him	Psalms 40:7-9b[6-8b]	Luke 24:44	NO	
The Messiah would come to do God's will	Psalms 40:8-9[7-8]	John 5:30	NO	
The Messiah would not conceal his mission from the congregation	Psalms 40:10-11[9-10]	Luke 4:16-21	NO	
The Messiah's betrayer would be a friend whom he broke bread with	Psalms 41:10[9]	Mark 14:17-18	NO	
The Messiah would speak with a message of grace	Psalms 45:3[2]	Luke 4:22	?	NO
The Messiah's throne would be everlasting	Psalms 45:7-8a[6-7a]	Luke 1:31-33	?	NO
The Messiah would be God	Psalms 45:7-8b[6-7b]	Hebrews 1:8-9	NO	
The Messiah would act with righteousness	Psalms 45:7-8c[6-7c]	John 5:30	?	NO

As the sample of claimed Christian "messianic prophecy" and "fulfillment" pairs continues to accumulate, there are now 23 such pairs, the previously noted pattern becomes even better defined – they focus on Jesus, the central figure in the

[16] A single entry indicates that the same answer applies to both "Prophecy" and "Fulfillment" claims. Two entries signify different answers for the "Prophecy" and "Fulfillment" claims, respectively. A "**?**" denotes text that, according to some Jewish Sages, could be messianic.

Christian messianic vision, not on the conditions that will prevail in the world due to his accomplishments.

DEBUNKING "PROOF TEXTS" FROM THE PSALMS[1]
PART 4 - PSALMS 55, 68, 78, 80, 89

I. INTRODUCTION

This is the fourth in a series of essays in which claims by Christian missionaries concerning "messianic prophecies" in the Psalms are investigated. The first three essays covered the 14 claimed "messianic prophecies" in Psalms 8, 16, 18, 27, 31, 35, 38, 40, 41 and 45.[2,3,4]

This essay investigates ten additional claims of "messianic prophecies" in the Christian "Old Testament" and their respective accounts of "fulfillment" in the New Testament, all of which are taken from the same ***reference list*** that was previously used.[5]

II. "MESSIANIC PROPHECY": COMPARING CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH PERSPECTIVES

This was covered in detail in Section II in the first essay of this series (please see footnote 2) and will not be repeated in this and the remaining essays.

III. ANALYSIS OF CLAIMED "MESSIANIC PROPHECIES" AND THEIR "FULFILLMENTS"

To say that a prophecy has been fulfilled means that the foretold event, condition, or situation has happened, and that one needs no longer await its completion or

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:
- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "h̲"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

[2] *Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms, Part 1 – Psalms 8, 16, 18 -* http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt1.pdf

[3] *Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms, Part 2 – Psalms 27, 31, 34, 35, 38 -* http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt2.pdf

[4] *Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms, Part 3 – Psalms 40, 41, 45 -* http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt3.pdf

[5] *Jesus is the Messiah: The Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled By Jesus Christ Ordered by Category -* http://contenderministries.org/prophecy/jesusmessiah2.php

fulfillment. On the other hand, a prophecy that has not yet happened, or is yet to be completed, remains a prophecy not fulfilled.

The "messianic prophecies" claimed to be present in Psalms 55, 68, 78, 80, and 89, along with the respective accounts of their "fulfillment" from the New Testament, are addressed in this essay. The analysis aims to determine whether any of these pairs of passages in the Christian "Old Testament" and New Testament qualify as a "messianic prophecy" and its "fulfillment", respectively.

A. Psalms 55

The *reference list* indicates that Psalms 55 contains one "messianic prophecy" that is "fulfilled" according to the New Testament, as shown in Table III.A-1.

Table III.A-1 – Claimed "Messianic Prophecies" and their "Fulfillments"

Statement	Citations[6]	
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"
The Messiah would be betrayed by a friend	Psalms 55:13-15[12-14]	Luke 22:47-48

1. Overview

Following is a summary description of this psalm to help put its context into perspective.

> **TREACHERY DENOUNCED: A man who had been betrayed by a close friend opens his heart in this Psalm. The victim of base treachery, he turns to God in supplication. He first pleads for His help, then describes his situation, and finally asserts his conviction that God will intervene. Tradition concurs that the Psalm is connected with Absalom's rebellion; the 'familiar friend' (verse 14) is named as Ahitophel in the Targum and in *Ethics of the Fathers* (4:3). Having once been a companion and close confidant of the king, Ahitophel was responsible for inciting David's son, Absalom, to plot against his own father. Disillusioned, David is forced to flee Jerusalem, and in despair wonders if, after having been betrayed by such an intimate friend (verses 13-15, 21-22), there remains any mortal who can be trusted. Consequently, his conclusion is to place all hope in God alone (verses 17 and 23). So strong are his feelings, that twice in the Psalm (verse 16 and 24) he wishes that his enemy meet with untimely death and destruction, a wish that was indeed realized (2 Samuel 17:23).[7]**

The superscription identifies King David as the author of this psalm. Even though Absalom (*AvshaLOM*), one of David's sons, started a rebellion against him with the help of the king's trusted advisor Ahitophel (*Ahitofel*), King David was unwavering in his faith that God would help him get through this crisis and prevail.

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[6] In cases where verse numbers differ between the Hebrew Bible and the Christian "Old Testament", the citation shows the verse number in the Hebrew Bible followed by the verse number in the Christian "Old Testament" in brackets. Example: Psalms 40:7-9a[6-8a].

[7] *Soncino Books of the Bible – The Psalms*, Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, Editor, p. 172, The Soncino Press (1992)

2. Investigating claimed "Messianic Prophecies" [and "Fulfillments"]

a. *The Messiah would be betrayed by a friend*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.A.2.a-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.A.2.a-1 – Psalms 55:13-15[12-14] and Hebrews 10:10-13

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 55:12-14	**Luke 22:47-48**	**Psalms 55:13-15**
12. For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: 13. But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. 14. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.	47. And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. 48. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?	13. For no enemy reviled me that I should bear it; my enemy did not open his mouth wide against me, that I should hide from him. 14. And you are a man of my equal, my prince and my esteemed one. 15. That together we would devise counsel; in the house of God we would walk with a multitude.

The situation described by King David is similar to the one encountered in Psalms 41 – he was betrayed by a close and trusted friend, yet he prevailed.

The "fulfillment" text for this "messianic prophecy" differs from that which was used with Psalms 41:10[9]. After he found his disciples sleeping upon his return from praying at the Mount of Olives, Jesus spotted Judas Iscariot in a crowd that had gathered. As Judas was approaching to kiss him, Jesus asked Judas if he came to betray him with a kiss.

In biblical times, the act of kissing someone or something was a way of paying homage (e.g. 1Samuel 10:1). Yet, according to the "fulfillment" text, the kiss by Judas was to be the "kiss of death". Consequently, trying to compare the "fulfillment" account with the situation being described by King David is problematic. Namely, the friend who betrayed King David failed in his mission, while the betrayal by Judas succeeded, and it lead to the crucifixion of Jesus. The same problem was encountered in the scenario that was attempted to be forced into Psalms 41:10[9].

Conclusion: Psalms 55:13-15[12-14] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

B. Psalms 68

The *reference list* indicates that Psalms 68 contains two "messianic prophecies" that are "fulfilled" according to the New Testament, as shown in Table III.B-1.

Table III.B-1 – Claimed "Messianic Prophecies" and their "Fulfillments"

Statement	Citations	
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"
The Messiah would ascend into heaven	Psalms 68:19a[18a]	Luke 24:51
The Messiah would give gifts to men	Psalms 68:19b[18b]	Matthew 10:1

1. Overview

Following is a summary description of this psalm to help put its context into perspective.

> **GOD'S VICTORIES: While this Psalm is one of the most magnificent of all (Ibn Ezra) in its forceful sweep of thought and language, the commentators are in disagreement on the events which occasioned it. The Targum and others connect it with the revelation at Sinai or the exodus from Egypt. If we look for an occasion in the lifetime of David, it might allude to the occasion when he triumphed in victories over Aram-Zobah and Aram Damascus, Moab, Edom and Philistia (2 Samuel 8) (Malbim). It has also been suggested (Kimchi) that it refers to the future downfall of Sennacherib's army in the days of Hezekiah. Meiri contends that, most probably, it is a prophecy relating to the battle of Gog and Magog which will lead to the coming of the Messiah. Whatever the reason for its composition, it takes the form of a triumphant march proclaiming the kingship of God over the earth.**[8]

The superscription identifies King David as the author of this psalm. He recounts the many victories Israel achieved with God's help over mighty empires, and foretells that this phenomenon of Israel's triumph will continue. King David then invites all nations to join in praising God.

2. Investigating claimed "Messianic Prophecies" [and "Fulfillments"]

a. *The Messiah would ascend into heaven*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.B.2.a-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

[8] *Soncino Books of the Bible – The Psalms*, Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, Editor, p. 209, The Soncino Press (1992)

<u>Table III.B.2.a-1</u> – Psalms 68:19a[18a] and Luke 24:51

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew
Psalms 68:18a	**Luke 24:51**	**Psalms 68:19a**
Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: [thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.]	And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.	You ascended on high, you took captives; [you took gifts to be among men, and also rebellious ones for Y-h God to dwell.]

This is not a prophetic passage – it is historical. Several historical scenarios have been proposed by the Jewish Sages, and two of these are presented here. Targum Yonathan and RASHI opine that David is referring to Moses, who ascended Mount Sinai on behalf of Israel to receive ("capture") the Torah from the hands of the angels (Proverbs 30:4).

According to RADAQ (Rabbi David Qim<u>h</u>i), David is speaking of God, who removed His "divine presence", the *Sh*^{e}*chiNAH*, from His "dwelling" in Jerusalem and remained aloof in His heavenly abode. In doing so, He allowed foreign nations to invade Israel.

The "fulfillment" text depicts "The Ascension", the scene where Jesus departed from those with whom he walked and spoke during one of his appearances following his alleged "resurrection". *What was accomplished by this action?* He just disappeared, apparently without a purpose, and he has not returned.

<u>Conclusion</u>: Psalms 68:19a[18a] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

b. *The Messiah would give gifts to men*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.B.2.b-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.B.2.b-1 – **Psalms 68:19b[18b] and Matthew 10:1**

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew
Psalms 68:18b	Matthew 10:1	Psalms 68:19b
Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.	And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.	You ascended on high, you took captives; you took gifts to be among men, and also rebellious ones for Y-h God to dwell.

The two interpretations from the previous case also apply to these "gifts". Targum Yonathan and RASHI explain that Moses brought down the Torah as a gift for mankind, even though there were those who rebelled against God and provoked Him.

According to RADAQ, God took away the gifts He gave to Israel – that He would "dwell" in their midst and that He would protect the people – until even the rebellious King of Assyria made plans to dwell in the holy city of Jerusalem.

The "fulfillment" text describes Jesus giving his 12 disciples the gifts to cast out unclean spirits (exorcism) and to heal all sicknesses and diseases (faith healing). Though the New Testament contains accounts of Jesus and the disciples performing exorcisms and engaging in faith healing, there is no indication from the context of the psalm itself that these were, in fact, the gifts. According to accounts in the Hebrew Bible, the ability to heal is almost exclusively God's, and with few exceptions, e.g., Elisha, it is a gift given by God, not by a "son of man", to someone of His choice [see also the discussion on Psalms 80 below].

Conclusion: **Psalms 68:19b[18b] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".**

C. Psalms 78

The *reference list* indicates that Psalms 78 contains one "messianic prophecy" that is "fulfilled" according to the New Testament, as shown in Table III.C-1.

Table III.C-1 – **Claimed "Messianic Prophecies" and their "Fulfillments"**

Statement	Citations	
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"
The Messiah would speak in parables	Psalms 78:2	Matthew 13:34-35

1. Overview

Following is a summary description of this psalm to help put its context into perspective.

> **LESSON OF ISRAEL'S HISTORY: A didactic Psalm, bringing home to the people a warning which was writ large in the annals. It reveals the Israelites' eternal mission to inspire all future generations to loyal obedience to God and His Divine Law. A survey is made of the historical moments of deliverance and decline from the days of Moses to David, hailing the election of David as the beginning of a new and better future. The Psalmist points out the dire consequences suffered when 'Ephraim' fails to learn from history that God is the sole source of their good fortune, and concludes with the poetic description of the Divine shepherd choosing David, the Judahite, to be the father of the dynasty that would lead the nation to be ever mindful of their eternal bond to God.**[9]

The superscription identifies *ASAF* as the author of this psalm.[10] *ASAF*'s message is that God's love and concern for Israel have always been present and will continue. Keeping this memory alive brings comfort and consolation in harsh times. Failing to do so causes people to go astray and transgress.

2. Investigating claimed "Messianic Prophecies" [and "Fulfillments"]

a. *The Messiah would speak in parables*

The relevant texts from the King James Version (KJV) "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.C.2.a-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.C.2.a-1 – Psalms 78:2 and Matthew 13:34-35

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew
Psalms 78:2	**Matthew 13:34-35**	**Psalms 78:2**
I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old:	34. All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: 35. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.	I shall open my mouth with a parable; I shall express riddles from time immemorial.

The psalm reviews events in Israel's history, which are expressed in terms of a parable and riddles of sorts, in that they are object lessons for all times – what the past has to teach present and future generations. The

[9] *Soncino Books of the Bible – The Psalms*, Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, Editor, p. 249, The Soncino Press (1992)
[10] *ASAF*, a contemporary of King David, is credited with composing Psalms 50, 73-83. He was a gifted Levite musician (1Chronicles 16:4-7) who was also endowed with a prophetic spirit (1Chronicles 25:2).

parable includes such expressions as "**... set a table in the desert ...**" (verse 19), and "**... and fire was kindled in Jacob ...**" (verse 21). Riddles include, "**A man ate the bread of the mighty ...**" (verse 25), and "**And He gave His might into captivity ...**" (verse 61; alluding to the Ark of the Covenant captured by the Philistines [1Samuel 4:11]).

This is not an attribute or a skill that will be unique to מָשִׁיחַ (***mashi'ah***). After all, parables had been used from time immemorial in teaching, and there are accounts in the Hebrew Bible of others who spoke in parables, such as *Bil'AM*, Job, King Solomon, Isaiah, and Ezekiel.

The "fulfillment" text claims that Jesus only addressed the multitudes in parables. Yet, there are many accounts in the Gospels in which Jesus talks "straight" and not in parables. In the final analysis, however, speaking in parables was a commonly used instructional technique, so that there is nothing special or unique about it.

Conclusion: Psalms 78:2 is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

D. Psalms 80

The *reference list* indicates that Psalms 80 contains one "messianic prophecy" that is "fulfilled" according to the New Testament, as shown in Table III.D-1.

Table III.D-1 – Claimed "Messianic Prophecies" and their "Fulfillments"

Statement	Citations	
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"
The Messiah would be at the right hand of God	Psalms 80:18[17]	Acts 5:31

1. Overview

Following is a summary description of this psalm to help put its context into perspective.

PRAYER FOR ISRAEL'S RESTORATION: Although it is clear that this prayer concerns itself with a time of national straits, the exact reference is a matter of varying opinions. Rashi sees it as an allusion to three periods of exile: the Babylonian, the Greek and the Roman. Malbim suggests that it was composed in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, when they returned from the Babylonian exile to rebuild the Temple, and their enemies threatened to thwart their plans by doing battle with them. Impoverished and in a dire position, they composed this prayer contrasting their return from Babylon with the exodus from Egypt. Hirsch develops the idea that it is a Psalm written for the generation of Israel in exile.[11]

The superscription identifies *ASAF* as the author of this psalm. Recalling the glorious relationship Israel had with God, *ASAF* pleads for it to be restored.

[11] *Soncino Books of the Bible – The Psalms*, Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, Editor, p. 263, The Soncino Press (1992)

2. Investigating claimed "Messianic Prophecies" [and "Fulfillments"]

a. *The Messiah would be at the right hand of God*

The relevant texts from the King James Version (KJV) "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.D.2.a-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.D.2.a-1 – Psalms 80:18[17] and Acts 5:31

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 80:17	**Acts 5:31***	**Psalms 80:18**
Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself.	[30. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.] 31. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.	May Your hand be upon the man [אִישׁ] of Your right hand, upon the person [בֶּן־אָדָם] whom You strengthened for Yourself.

* Verse 30 is not part of the "fulfillment" text, but is included in order to clarify the context.

Several earlier verses in the psalm help clarify the context of verse 18[17]:

> **Psalms 80:9,15-16[8,14-15] – (9) You uprooted a vine from Egypt; You drove out nations and planted it.**
> **(15) O God of Hosts, return now; look from heaven and see, and be mindful of this vine, (16) And of the stock [of vine] that Your right hand has planted, and over the son You have strengthened for Yourself.**

The psalmist is praying to God and asking that Israel be again protected by Him. Israel is compared to a vine elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, e.g.:

> **Jeremiah 2:21 - Yet I planted you a noble vine stock, entirely of right seed; now how have you turned yourself into a degenerate wild vine to Me?**

Israel is also called God's son in the Hebrew Bible:

> **Exodus 4:22 - And you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus said the Lord, "Israel is My son, My firstborn." '**

When the prophet Isaiah spoke to Israel on behalf of God, he described them as having been chosen and strengthened by God:

> **Isaiah 41:8-10 – (8) But you, Israel My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham, who loved Me, (9) Whom I grasped from the ends of the earth, and from its nobles I called you, and I said to you, "You are My servant"; I chose you and I did not despise you. (10) Do not fear for I am with you; be not discouraged for I am your God: I strengthened you, I even helped you, I even supported you with My righteous hand.**

Clearly, the reference in verse 18[17] is to Israel, not to מָשִׁיחַ. It is part of a prayerful wish for Israel to regain its favor with God.

The KJV, once again, attempts to enhance the Christological appeal of this verse by exploiting a term that has several meanings. For poetic reasons, the psalmist made use of two different terms that have the same meaning. In the first part of verse 18[17] the term אִישׁ (***ISH***), **a man**, is used, and in the second part of the verse a synonym, בֶּן־אָדָם (***BEN-ADAM***), is used, and which literally means **[a] son of man** or **[a] son of Adam**. These terms are idioms for "a man" or "a person", both in Biblical and in Modern Hebrew, i.e., "a mortal human being". Moreover, both terms, אִישׁ and בֶּן־אָדָם, are occasionally used poetically as metaphors for "a group of persons", such as "a people". The KJV translators appear to have been aware of these nuances, as can be seen from their rendition of בֶּן־אָדָם, as "**a man**" at Job 16:21. Similarly, at Psalms 89:48[47], the plural בְּנֵי אָדָם (***b^{e}NEI ADAM***), is translated in the KJV as "**men**".

The "fulfillment" text appears to have one direct "connection" with the "messianic prophecy", namely, the use of [God's] "right hand" and an implied "connection" via the terms "man" and "son of man". These refer to Jesus as God manifest in the flesh while on earth, and particularly as the title "Son of man" is used in connection with his alleged sacrificial death and resurrection (e.g., Luke 9:22; note that the ascension is mentioned in Acts 5:30, the verse preceding the "fulfillment" text).[12]

Conclusion: Psalms 80:18[17] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

E. Psalms 89

The *reference list* indicates that Psalms 89 contains five "messianic prophecies" that are "fulfilled" according to the New Testament, as shown in Table III.E-1.

Table III.E-1 – Claimed "Messianic Prophecies" and their "Fulfillments"

Statement	Citations	
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"
The Messiah would be a descendant of David	Psalms 89:4-5[3-4]	Matthew 1:1
The Messiah would call God his Father	Psalms 89:27[26]	Matthew 11:27
The Messiah would be God's "firstborn."	Psalms 89:28[27]	Mark 16:6
The Messiah would be a descendant of David	Psalms 89:30[29]	Matthew 1:1
The Messiah would be a descendant of David	Psalms 89:36-37[35-36]	Matthew 1:1

[12] Jesus is called the "Son of man" (note the capital "S") in 84 out of the 85 instances of this expression in the KJV New Testament. The single exception is at Hebrews 2:6, where the author points to Psalms 8:5[4] as a prophetic statement about Jesus, and wherein the phrase "son of man" (note the lower-case "s") is "quoted".

1. Overview

Following is a summary description of this psalm to help put its context into perspective.

> **MEDITATION IN NATIONAL ADVERSITY: Two divisions are clearly marked in the Psalm, with the break at verse 39. The first section deals with the past in which the two attributes of God, mercy and faithfulness, were abundantly demonstrated in His relation with Israel. In particular the promise to David, that his throne would endure for ever, is recalled. The second section paints its dark picture of the nation's vicissitudes and the overthrow of the kingdom by a triumphant enemy. So glaring is the contrast between the promise and its frustration, that the Psalmist gives utterance to his perplexity in forceful language, and finally prays that God will remember His people in their adversity.**[13]

The superscription attributes this psalm to Ethan the Ezrahite.[14] He reflects upon God's promises to King David, as presented in verses 4-38 with God as the speaker, and expresses his confidence that God will fulfill them. This psalm, like Psalms 45, contains passages which some Jewish Sages have interpreted as messianic text, while others view them as historical.

2. Investigating claimed "Messianic Prophecies" [and "Fulfillments"]

a. *The Messiah would be a descendant of David*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.E.2.a-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

<u>Table III.E.2.a-1</u> – Psalms 89:4-5[3-4] and Matthew 1:1

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew
Psalms 89:3-4	Matthew 1:1	Psalms 89:4-5
3. I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, 4. Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah.	The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.	4. I formed a covenant with My chosen one; I swore to David My servant. 5. Until eternity, I shall establish your seed, and I shall build your throne for all generations. Selah.

These two verses summarize the central theme of this psalm – God's covenant with King David. The details of this covenant are reviewed in verses 20-38 of the psalm.

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[13] *<u>Soncino Books of the Bible – The Psalms</u>*, Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, Editor, p. 289, The Soncino Press (1992)
[14] Ethan the Ezrahite (***EITAN ha'EzraHI***) was the chief musician and a composer in King David's and King Solomon's court.

The original promise was made to King David via the prophet Nathan:

> **2Samuel 7:12-16 – (12) When your days are fulfilled, and you shall lie with your forefathers, then I will raise up your seed that shall issue from your body after you, and I will establish his kingdom. (13) He shall build a house for My Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. (14) I will be to him a father, and he shall be to Me a son; so that when he goes astray I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with afflictions of human beings. (15) And My mercy shall not depart from him; in the manner in which I withdrew it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. (16) And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you; your throne shall be established forever.**

This promise includes the following elements:

- **An everlasting dynasty, the Davidic dynasty, is established with David.**
- **David's heir to the throne, through whom this dynasty shall pass, will be one of his natural (biological) sons.**
- **The son who inherits the throne from David is the one who will build the Temple in Jerusalem.**
- **The Davidic dynasty will propagate through David's seed, i.e., via his direct biological descendants.**
- **Every future king who sits upon the throne of David will be a mortal man.**
- **Every future king who sits upon the throne of David will have a special "father-son" relationship with God, so that when he sins, he will be duly punished.**
- **Even when future kings (in David's seat) commit iniquity, God will keep the Davidic dynasty intact, and not terminate it as He did with Saul's kingship.**

The establishment of this everlasting Davidic dynasty is significant, since from it will emerge מָשִׁיחַ, as was already alluded to in Jacob's blessing to Judah:

> **Genesis 49:10 - The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff, until Shiloh come, and to him shall gather the nations.**

The "fulfillment" text is the first verse in the New Testament, the preface to the genealogy listed in the Gospel of Matthew. The title of "son of David" is applied to Jesus more than a dozen times in the New Testament (e.g., Matthew 20:31; Mark 10:48; Luke 18:38), even though it is false from the perspective of the Hebrew Bible, the Scripture in force throughout the lifetime of Jesus and for some years after his death.

First, according to Christian theology, Jesus did not have an earthly father. Yet, according to the Hebrew Bible, blood rights, such as Tribal pedigree and the Davidic throne, are transmitted exclusively from a human father to his biological sons (e.g., Numbers 1:18), which rules out such a transfer through the process of adoption. In fact, the psalmist uses the Hebrew term זַרְעֲךָ (***zar'aCHA***), **your seed**, the 2nd-person, singular, masculine

gender inflexion of the compound noun זֶרַע (*ZEra*), **seed**, to refer to King David's descendants who will occupy his throne, which will include מָשִׁיחַ. Whenever the compound noun זֶרַע is applied in the Hebrew Bible in reference to a person's children, it exclusively refers to progeny, i.e., biological descendants.[15] Yet, according to the New Testament, the Holy Spirit fathered Jesus and, therefore, Jesus did not have an earthly father. *How, then, can Jesus be the "seed of David", or the "son of David"?*

Second, Christian missionaries claim that Jesus, through his "virgin birth", is the "seed of a woman", for which they use Genesis 3:15 as the so-called "proof text" (see the essay referenced in footnote 15). However, as noted above, according to the Hebrew Bible, tribal pedigree passes exclusively from a human father to his male progeny {his sons}. *How, then, can the "seed of a woman" also be the "seed of David" or the "son of David"?*

Finally, according to some Gospel accounts, Jesus himself appears to deny that the "Christ" (the Greek/Christian term for "Messiah") would be a descendant of King David:

> **Matthew 22:41-45(KJV) – (41) While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, (42) Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. (43) He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, (44) The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? (45) If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?** [See also Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44.]

So, if Jesus did not believe that מָשִׁיחַ will be a descendant of King David, it follows that he denied the need for the validation that מָשִׁיחַ is of the Davidic lineage. This situation creates a serious dilemma for Christianity since it contradicts the claim that Jesus is the Messiah by virtue of his ancestry and, thereby, is fulfilling Biblical prophecy.

Conclusion: Psalms 89:4-5[3-4] may be a valid "messianic prophecy", though it remains unfulfilled.

b. *The Messiah would call God his Father*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.E.2.b-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

[15] This term and its applications throughout the Hebrew Bible are described in detail in the essay, *Genesis 3:15 - The "Seed of A Woman": A Kernel of Deception* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Gen315.pdf

Table III.E.2.b-1 – Psalms 89:27[26] and Matthew 11:27

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew
Psalms 89:26	**Matthew 11:27**	**Psalms 89:27**
He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.	All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.	He will call to Me, 'You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.'

Throughout Jewish history, including Biblical times, Jews have referred to God as "our Father":

> **1Chronicles 29:10 - And David blessed the Lord before the eyes of the entire assembly, and David said, "Blessed are You, the God of Israel our Father, from everlasting to everlasting.** [See also Isaiah 63:16, 64:7; Jeremiah 3:19, 31:8[7].]

King Solomon and, by implication, future monarchs from King David's lineage, were to have a special "Father-son" relationship with God:

> **1Chronicles 28:6 - And He said to me, 'Your son Solomon, he shall build My House and My Courts, for I have chosen him to Me as a son, and I shall be to him as a Father.** [See also 2Samuel 7:14; 1Chronicles 17:13, 22:10.]

The prophet Malachi points to God as our common Father:

> **Malachi 2:10 - Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us? Why should we betray, each one his brother, to profane the covenant of our forefathers?**

This is still true today since our daily liturgy includes 1Chronicles 29:10. The liturgies for Fast Days, for the Ten Days of Repentance (which include ***Rosh haShanah*** and ***Yom Kipur***) contain appeals to God that start with the phrase אָבִינוּ מַלְכֵּנוּ (***avinu malKEinu***), **our Father, our King**. The prayer for the State of Israel opens up with the phrase אָבִינוּ שֶׁבַּשָּׁמָיִם (***avinu she'ba'shaMAyim***), **our Father Who is in Heaven**. In other words, referring to God as "my Father" (or, "our Father") is something that has been, and will continue to be, commonplace in Judaism. מָשִׁיחַ, too, will follow this practice along with all other Jewish people of his time.

The "fulfillment" text conveys the message that, because "the Father" and "the Son" are mutually and exclusively known only to each other, "the Father" will be known to people only when "the Son" reveals Him to them. This is an absurd concept! In the first place, according to the Torah (e.g. Deuteronomy 32:39), and as echoed by the prophets (e.g., Isaiah 46:5; Jeremiah 49:19; Ezekiel 28:1-19), any claim of equality with God is tantamount to committing blasphemy. Secondly, "the Son", Jesus,

appointed himself as the "gatekeeper" who will decide to whom he would reveal "the Father". This declaration violates what the Hebrew Bible teaches, that all people are urged to seek and know God directly, without having to be subjected to the will and mercy of a mediator (e.g., Deuteronomy 4:29; Isaiah 55:6; Jeremiah 31:33[32]; Hosea 3:5).

Conclusion: Psalms 89:27[26] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

c. *The Messiah would be God's "firstborn."*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.E.2.c-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.E.2.c-1 – Psalms 89:28[27] and Mark 16:6

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 89:27	**Mark 16:6**	**Psalms 89:28**
Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.	And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.	I, too, shall make him a firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.

With God as the speaker here, the psalmist uses the Hebrew term בְּכוֹר (***b***^{e}***CHOR***), **a firstborn**, as he applies to King David the promise originally made about Solomon in 2Samuel 7:14 (see verse 21[20] in this psalm, and also Psalms 2:7). The use of the generic בְּכוֹר, symbolizes the position that a firstborn son holds within a family according to Jewish Law. He owns the *birthright* (Genesis 25:31-34; Deuteronomy 21:15-17) and, therefore, has a higher status among his siblings. In this sense is the term בְּכוֹר applied to King David – he was the highest of all the past kings, which may also be said of the future מָשִׁיחַ.

Perhaps aiming to enhance the Christological appeal of this verse, the KJV mistranslated the generic term and renders it **my firstborn**. The difference is significant because it alters the context of the verse, from God regarding someone as having the status of a firstborn to God declaring that someone is His firstborn. To the detriment of the KJV, however, God had already declared who His firstborn is:

> **Exodus 4:22 - And you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus said the Lord, "Israel is My son, My firstborn [בְּכֹרִי]."**

God calls Israel בְּכֹרִי (***b***^{e}***chori***), **My firstborn**, and this points to an added dimension – God not only selected Israel as *a chosen people*, He actually

took "ownership" of Israel as *<u>His chosen people</u>*, exalted above all other nations.

The "fulfillment" text is taken from the resurrection narrative at the end of the Gospel of Mark, which tells of three women who brought spices to the sepulcher, where Jesus was allegedly buried following his crucifixion, in order to anoint him. However, when they entered the place, his body was not there, and they were told by a man dressed in a white robe, allegedly an angel, that Jesus "is risen". The implied "connection" between the "fulfillment" text and the "messianic prophecy" is that the "resurrection" of Jesus attested to the fact that his sacrificial death was fully accepted by "the Father" and paid for the sins of mankind, a sequence of events that is claimed as the evidence that Jesus was "the Son". Considering the fact that the Hebrew Bible strictly prohibits human vicarious atonement, and as it also excludes the Christian scenario of "God coming to earth in the flesh", the pairing of these two texts is simply unbiblical.

<u>Conclusion</u>: Psalms 89:28[27] may be a valid "messianic prophecy", though it remains unfulfilled.

d. *The Messiah would be a descendant of David*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.E.2.d-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

<u>Table III.E.2.d-1</u> – Psalms 89:30[29] and Matthew 1:1

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew
Psalms 89:29	**Matthew 1:1**	**Psalms 89:30**
His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.	The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.	And I shall make his seed endure forever, and his throne as the days of the heavens.

God is still the speaker here, and He continues to review His original promise to King David. The psalmist again uses the Hebrew term זֶרַע, this time in the 3rd-person, singular, masculine inflexion, זַרְעוֹ (*zar'o*), **his seed**, to refer to King David's descendants who will occupy his throne, which will also include מָשִׁיחַ.

Since the "fulfillment" text is the same as for Psalms 89:4-5[3-4], and with no new information provided in the "messianic prophecy", the relevant discussion in Section III.E.2.a applies here as well and is not repeated.

Conclusion: Psalms 89:30[29] may be a valid "messianic prophecy", though it remains unfulfilled.

e. *The Messiah would be a descendant of David*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.E.2.e-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.E.2.e-1 – Psalms 89:36-37[35-36] and Matthew 1:1

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 89:35-36	**Matthew 1:1**	**Psalms 89:36-37**
35. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. 36. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.	The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.	36. Once (and for all) have I sworn by My holiness, that I will not fail David. 37. His seed will be forever and his throne is like the sun before Me.

God is still the speaker here, as He declares that the oath he made to King David, which is eternal and will not be altered, is that **his seed**, זַרְעוֹ, i.e., King David's descendants, will exist to eternity, and so will his dynasty; all of which also applies to מָשִׁיחַ.

Since the "fulfillment" text is the same as for Psalms 89:4-5[3-4], and with no new information provided in the "messianic prophecy", the relevant discussion in Section III.E.2.a applies here as well and is not repeated.

Conclusion: Psalms 89:36-37[35-36] may be a valid "messianic prophecy", though it remains unfulfilled.

IV. SUMMARY

In this fourth in a series of essays on so-called "proof texts" in the Psalms, ten such texts from Psalms 55, 68, 78, 80, and 89, which are claimed to be Christian "messianic prophecies", along with their respective "fulfillment" texts from the New Testament, were investigated. The analysis addressed content, context, and correspondence between each pair of texts, in order to assess the validity of the claims. Cumulative results of all "messianic prophecy" and "fulfillment" pairs investigated thus far are summarized in Table IV-1. [Note: Results from the earlier essays are shown in a darker highlight, and current results are shown in a lighter highlight.]

<u>Table IV-1</u> – Claimed "messianic prophecies" in Psalms 8, 16, 18, 27, 31, 34, 35, 38, 40, 41, 45, 55, 68, 78, 80, and 89, and their "fulfillments"

Statement	Citations		Valid?[16]	
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"		
Infants would give praise to the Messiah	Psalms 8:3[2]	Matthew 21:16	NO	
The Messiah would be given authority over all things	Psalms 8:7[6]	Matthew 28:18	NO	
The Messiah would be resurrected	Psalms 16:8-10a	Matthew 28:6	NO	
The Messiah's body would not be subject to decay	Psalms 16:8-10b	Acts 13:35-37	NO	
The Messiah would be exalted to the presence of God	Psalms 16:11	Acts 2:25-33	NO	
The Messiah would come for all people	Psalms 18:50[49]	Ephesians 3:4-6	NO	
The Messiah's enemies would stumble and fall when they came for him	Psalms 27:2	John 18:3-6	NO	
The Messiah would be accused by false witnesses	Psalms 27:12	Matthew 26:59-61	NO	
None of the Messiah's bones would be broken	Psalms 34:21[20]	John 19:32-33	NO	
There would be plots to kill the Messiah	Psalms 31:14[13]	Matthew 27:1	NO	
There would be plots to kill the Messiah	Psalms 31:14[13]	Matthew 27:1	NO	
The Messiah would be accused by false witnesses	Psalms 35:11	Mark 14:55-59	NO	
The Messiah would be hated by many without cause	Psalms 35:19	John 18:19-23	NO	
The Messiah would be silent before his accusers	Psalms 38:14-15[13-14]	Matthew 26:62-63	NO	
The Messiah's offering of himself would replace all sacrifices	Psalms 40:7-9a[6-8a]	Hebrews 10:10-13	NO	
The Messiah would say the scriptures were written of him	Psalms 40:7-9b[6-8b]	Luke 24:44	NO	
The Messiah would come to do God's will	Psalms 40:8-9[7-8]	John 5:30	NO	
The Messiah would not conceal his mission from the congregation	Psalms 40:10-11[9-10]	Luke 4:16-21	NO	
The Messiah's betrayer would be a friend whom he broke bread with	Psalms 41:10[9]	Mark 14:17-18	NO	
The Messiah would speak with a message of grace	Psalms 45:3[2]	Luke 4:22	?	NO
The Messiah's throne would be everlasting	Psalms 45:7-8a[6-7a]	Luke 1:31-33	?	NO
The Messiah would be God	Psalms 45:7-8b[6-7b]	Hebrews 1:8-9	NO	
The Messiah would act with righteousness	Psalms 45:7-8c[6-7c]	John 5:30	?	NO
The Messiah would be betrayed by a friend	Psalms 55:13-15[12-14]	Luke 22:47-48	NO	
The Messiah would ascend into heaven	Psalms 68:19a[18a]	Luke 24:51	NO	
The Messiah would give gifts to men	Psalms 68:19b[18b]	Matthew 10:1	NO	
The Messiah would speak in parables	Psalms 78:2	Matthew 13:34-35	NO	
The Messiah would be at the right hand of God	Psalms 80:18[17]	Acts 5:31	NO	
The Messiah would be a descendant of David	Psalms 89:4-5[3-4]	Matthew 1:1	?	NO
The Messiah would call God his Father	Psalms 89:27[26]	Matthew 11:27	NO	
The Messiah would be God's "firstborn."	Psalms 89:28[27]	Mark 16:6	?	NO

[16] A single entry indicates that the same answer applies to both "Prophecy" and "Fulfillment" claims. Two entries signify different answers for the "Prophecy" and "Fulfillment", respectively.

The Messiah would be a descendant of David	Psalms 89:30[29]	Matthew 1:1	**?**	**NO**
The Messiah would be a descendant of David	Psalms 89:36-37[35-36]	Matthew 1:1	**?**	**NO**

As the sample of claimed Christian "messianic prophecy" and "fulfillment" pairs continues to accumulate, there are now 33 such pairs, the previously noted pattern becomes even better defined – they focus on Jesus, the central figure in the Christian messianic vision, not on the conditions that will prevail in the world due to his accomplishments.

DEBUNKING "PROOF TEXTS" FROM THE PSALMS[1]
PART 5 - PSALMS 69

I. INTRODUCTION

This is the fifth in a series of essays in which claims by Christian missionaries concerning "messianic prophecies" in the Psalms are investigated. The first four essays covered the 33 claimed "messianic prophecies" in Psalms 8, 16, 18, 27, 31, 35, 38, 40, 41, 45, 55, 68, 78, 80, and 89.[2,3,4,5]

This essay investigates eleven additional claims of "messianic prophecies" in the Christian "Old Testament" and their respective accounts of "fulfillment" in the New Testament, all of which are taken from the same ***reference list*** that was previously used.[6]

II. "MESSIANIC PROPHECY": COMPARING CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH PERSPECTIVES

This was covered in detail in Section II in the first essay of this series (please see footnote 2) and will not be repeated in this and the remaining essays.

III. ANALYSIS OF CLAIMED "MESSIANIC PROPHECIES" AND THEIR "FULFILLMENTS"

To say that a prophecy has been fulfilled means that the foretold event, condition, or situation has happened, and that one needs no longer await its completion or

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:
- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "h̲"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

[2] *Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms, Part 1 – Psalms 8, 16, 18 -* http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt1.pdf

[3] *Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms, Part 2 – Psalms 27, 31, 34, 35, 38 -* http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt2.pdf

[4] *Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms, Part 3 – Psalms 40, 41, 45 -* http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt3.pdf

[5] Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms, Part 4 – Psalms 55, 68, 78, 80, and 89 – http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt4.pdf

[6] *Jesus is the Messiah: The Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled By Jesus Christ Ordered by Category -* http://contenderministries.org/prophecy/jesusmessiah2.php

fulfillment. On the other hand, a prophecy that has not yet happened, or is yet to be completed, remains a prophecy not fulfilled.

The "messianic prophecies" claimed to be present in Psalms 69, along with the respective accounts of their "fulfillment" from the New Testament, are addressed in this essay. The analysis aims to determine whether any of these pairs of passages in the Christian "Old Testament" and New Testament qualify as a "messianic prophecy" and its "fulfillment", respectively.

A. Psalms 69

The *reference list* indicates that Psalms 69 contains 11 "messianic prophecies" that are "fulfilled" according to the New Testament, as shown in Table III.A-1.

Table III.A-1 – Claimed "Messianic Prophecies" and their "Fulfillments"

Statement	Citations[7]	
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"
The Messiah would be hated by many without cause	Psalms 69:5[4]	Luke 23:13-22
The Messiah would bear reproach, for God's sake	Psalms 69:8[7]	Matthew 26:65-67
The Messiah would be rejected by the Jews	Psalms 69:9a[8a]	John 1:11
The Messiah's brothers would disbelieve him	Psalms 69:9b[8b]	John 7:3-5
The Messiah would be angered by disrespect toward the temple	Psalms 69:10a[9a]	John 2:13-17
The Messiah would bear reproach, for God's sake	Psalms 69:10b[9b]	Romans 15:3
The Messiah's heart would be broken	Psalms 69:21a[20a]	John 19:34
The Messiah's disciples would fail him in his time of need	Psalms 69:21b[20b]	Mark 14:33-41
The Messiah would be offered gall and vinegar	Psalms 69:22a[21a]	Matthew 27:34
The Messiah would thirst	Psalms 69:22b[21b]	John 19:28
The potter's field would be uninhabited	Psalms 69:26[25]	Acts 1:16-20

1. Overview

Following is a summary description of this psalm to help put its context into perspective.

PRAYER OF THE PERSECUTED: A deeply pathetic human document is presented by this Psalm. A devout servant of God is undergoing cruel treatment and fells that his sufferings are due to his religious loyalty. He pleads with God for relief and, in burning indignation, begs that retribution come upon his persecutors. His faith remains firm through the ordeal and he looks to the future with confidence. There are several passages in the Psalm which point to the fact that it was written as a prophetic vision that that foretold of the era when Israel would be in captivity. Indeed, the Midrash understands the Psalm as relating to the Babylonian exile. In collective singular, the downtrodden outcasts describe their woeful sufferings, while, at the same time, begging for the mercy of God. In the closing verses they affirm their faith in Him by triumphantly proclaiming His praises in a sincere song

[7] In cases where verse numbers differ between the Hebrew Bible and the Christian "Old Testament", the citation shows the verse number in the Hebrew Bible followed by the verse number in the Christian "Old Testament" in brackets. Example: Psalms 69:5[4].

of devotion. The parallels between this Psalm and the book of Jeremiah are frequent and striking.[8]

The superscription identifies King David as the author of this psalm. The psalm, written entirely in the 1st-person, can be interpreted as David either writing about himself or foretelling the future plight of the Jewish people during those long and bitter times in exile, and pleading for their speedy deliverance.

2. Investigating claimed "Messianic Prophecies" [and "Fulfillments"]

a. *The Messiah would be hated by many without cause*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.A.2.a-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.A.2.a-1 – Psalms 69:5[4] and Luke 23:13-22

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 69:4	**Luke 23:13-22**	**Psalms 69:5**
They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored that which I took not away.	13. And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, 14. Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: 15. No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him. 16. I will therefore chastise him, and release him. 17. (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.) 18. And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas: 19. (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.) 20. Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. 21. But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. 22. And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go.	Those who hate me for nothing are more numerous than the hairs of my head; mighty are those who would cut me off, who are my enemies because of lies; what I did not steal, should I return?

This verse can be understood either as relating to King David's own life, or as foretelling events that will occur to the Jewish people during their various exiles.

[8] Soncino Books of the Bible – The Psalms, Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, Editor, p. 216, The Soncino Press (1992)

As this verse pertains to King David, and as was gleaned from similar scenarios in several of the psalms previously investigated, he had many enemies and was the target and victim of many plots and slander campaigns. In this case, as in Psalms 35, King David wondered if he should restore that which his false accusers charged he had taken.

Regarding the relevance to Israel's exile, the historical record is witness to the many times that trumped up charges, such as blood libels, poisoning of wells, etc., were leveled against the Jews who lived in these various places, simply as a ploy to dispossess them of their wealth.

The "fulfillment" text is taken from a passage that describes Pontius Pilate discussing the release of Jesus with the spiritual and political leaders of the Jews. They allegedly demanded that he be crucified, and Pilate said that he found no reason to put him to death, and that he wanted to punish him and then release him before the Passover.

The match-up of this "messianic prophecy" and "fulfillment" pair is not obvious. King David is complaining about the demands made upon him or, prophetically, upon Israel in exile, by oppressors on the false pretext that they were executing justice. The author of the Gospel of Luke provides an account of the Roman leader wanting to release Jesus while the leaders of the Jews accuse Jesus of various offenses and demand that he be executed. The problem is that the outcomes of the two situations were quite different, as was noted in several previous instances. King David survived all these plots, while Jesus wound up being crucified.

Another difficulty is created by ascribing King David's problems to Jesus. Namely, it forces the next verse in the psalm to apply to Jesus as well:

> **Psalms 69:6[5] - O God, You know my folly, and my guilty deeds are not concealed from You.**

King David admitted that he sinned; in fact, he committed sins with intent [the noun אָשָׁם (***ASHAM***), **intentional sin**, is used here]. His trials and tribulations were, at least in part, punishment for the sins he committed. Thus, by implication, this makes Jesus a sinner, one who sinned with intent, which contradicts Christian doctrine.

A similar problem arises from the following account a few verses later:

> **Psalms 69:12[11] - And I made sackcloth my raiment, and I became a byword to them.**

King David lamented about how his enemies made him the subject of derision when he donned sackcloth, the garb commonly worn during times of repentance (and mourning). The Hebrew Bible describes an occasion

when King David was in sackcloth following his sinful act of conducting a census of Israel (1Chronicles 21:16).[9] Once again, this alludes to King David's actions for the purpose of obtaining atonement for his sins. The New Testament contains no accounts of Jesus in sackcloth.

These same two issues also apply to the other "messianic prophecies" in this psalm.

Conclusion: Psalms 69:5[4] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

b. *The Messiah would bear reproach, for God's sake*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.A.2.b-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.A.2.b-1 – Psalms 69:8[7] and Matthew 26:65-67

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 69:7	**Matthew 26:65-67**	**Psalms 69:8**
Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face.	65. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. 66. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. 67. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands,	For I have borne humiliation because of You; disgrace has covered my face.

King David tells of how he has suffered in God's cause. A similar sentiment was expressed later by the prophet Jeremiah:

> **Jeremiah 15:15 - You know, O Lord, remember me and think of me, and avenge me of my pursuers. Take me not to Your long suffering, know, I bore disgrace for Your sake.**

Prophetically, this would be speaking of Israel in exile suffering humiliation and disgrace among the Gentile nations, because the Jewish people chose not to accept the other faiths. Psalms 44, which parallels Isaiah 53 in several places, is a prophetic psalm about the distress Israel will suffer in exile, yet will not turn away from God and follow other gods:

> **Psalms 44:10-23 – (10) Even if You have forsaken us and put us to shame, and You do not go out in our hosts; (11) You make us retreat from the adversary,**

[9] According to Jewish Law, which is based is Exodus 30:11-16, counting individuals directly is prohibited.

and our enemies plunder for themselves; (12) You deliver us as sheep to be eaten, and You scatter us among the nations. (13) You sell Your people without gain, and You did not increase their price; (14) You make us a reproach to our neighbors, a scorn and a derision to those around us; (15) You make us a byword among the nations, a [cause for] shaking the head among the kingdoms. (16) All day long, my disgrace is before me, and the shame of my face has covered me. (17) From the voice of the one who taunts and blasphemes, because of an enemy and an avenger. (18) All this has befallen us and we have not forgotten You, neither have we betrayed Your covenant. (19) Our heart has not turned back, nor have our steps turned away from Your path, (20) Even when You crushed us in a place of serpents, and You covered us with darkness. (21) If we forgot the name of our God and spread out our palms to a strange god, (22) Will God not search this out? For He knows the secrets of the heart. (23) For it is for Your sake that we are killed all the time, [that] we are considered as sheep for the slaughter.

Clearly, verse 8[7] can describe King David or Israel.

The "fulfillment" text recounts the scene after Jesus spoke in front of the Sanhedrin, headed by the High Priest Caiphas, who reacted by rending his clothes and accusing Jesus of blasphemy. The fact that the author of the Gospel of Matthew (see also Mark 14:63) recorded such an episode demonstrates a profound ignorance of the Mosaic Law:

Leviticus 21:10 - And the priest who is elevated above his brothers [the High Priest], upon whose head the anointment oil has been poured or who has been inaugurated to wear the garments, he shall not leave his hair unshorn or rend his garments.

In other words, the High Priest was prohibited from rending his clothes for any reason (rending of clothes was often done as a symbol of mourning). Thus, it must be asked: *Can these accounts in the Gospels be trusted to be accurate? How valid are these accounts about Jesus?*

Conclusion: Psalms 69:8[7] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

c. *The Messiah would be rejected by the Jews*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.A.2.c-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.A.2.c-1 – Psalms 69:9a[8a] and John 1:11

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 69:8a	**John 1:11**	**Psalms 69:9a**
I am become a stranger unto my brethren, [and an alien unto my mother's children.]	He came unto his own, and his own received him not.	I was a stranger to my brothers, [and a foreigner to the sons of my mother.]

King David laments the mistreatment by his own family, as if he were a stranger. The resentment by his older brothers may have resulted from the fact that he, the youngest, was chosen to succeed Saul as the king of Israel. Alternatively, this could be speaking prophetically of the descendants of Ishmael (Isaac's paternal brother) and of Esau (the "full" brother of Jacob), and how they have betrayed and mistreated the Jewish people.[10]

The "fulfillment" text is taken from a passage that describes the "witness of John the Baptist" concerning the coming of Jesus and his mission, and how some (allegedly the Jews) rejected this revelation, while others received him.[11] Once again, the issue of identifying King David with Jesus creates a conflict for Christian theology. According to verse 6[5], King David confessed to having intentionally transgressed, thereby admitting his sinful nature, which must then also be applied to Jesus.

Conclusion: Psalms 69:9a[8a] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

d. *The Messiah's brothers would disbelieve him*

The relevant texts from the King James Version (KJV) "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.A.2.d-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.A.2.d-1 – Psalms 69:9b[8b] and John 7:3-5

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 69:8b	**John 7:3-5**	**Psalms 69:9b**
I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children.	3. His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. 4. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world. 5. For neither did his brethren believe in him.	I was a stranger to my brothers, and a foreigner to the sons of my mother.

[10] Paternal brothers share a common father, but have different mothers. Uterine brothers share a common mother, but have different fathers. "Full" brothers share both parents.
[11] A rather different interpretation, one that does not vilify the Jews, is offered by Pastor Jon Courson who, based on the Greek grammatical syntax, explains it this way: "The first time the Greek word for `his own' is used in this verse, it is in a neuter form, referring to creation. The second time, it is masculine, referring to humanity. In other words, Jesus came into this world, and all of creation acknowledged Him. The winds obeyed Him. The water supported Him. The rocks were ready to cry out to Him. But there was one segment of creation which received Him not: man. Human nature is the only part of nature which refuses to worship God." [The commentary is available at - http://www.blueletterbible.org/]

The explanation of this portion of the verse was included in the preceding subsection.

The "fulfillment" text is drawn from a passage in which Jesus is urged by his brothers to go up to Jerusalem, in spite of the risk of being killed, to teach at the Feast of Tabernacles so that he can be in the public eye and become known. The brothers, apparently skeptical of who Jesus claimed to be, dared him to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem and demonstrate his "miracles" in public rather than hide out. James and Jude, two brothers of Jesus, became "believers" only after Jesus was crucified and allegedly "resurrected". The question that comes to mind here is: *If a person's own brothers do not believe him, how can he expect the rest of the world to do so?*

Conclusion: Psalms 69:9b[8b] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

e. *The Messiah would be angered by disrespect toward the temple*

The relevant texts from the King James Version (KJV) "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.A.2.e-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.A.2.e-1 – Psalms 69:10a[9a] and John 2:13-17

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew
Psalms 69:9a	**John 2:13-17**	**Psalms 69:10a**
For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; [and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.]	13. And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14. And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: 15. And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; 16. And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. 17. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.	For the envy of Your house has consumed me, [and the humiliations of those who blaspheme You have fallen upon me.]

King David was being consumed by his vision of how the envy by the Gentiles of the future Temple and Israel's special status would manifest itself as hatred.

The "fulfillment" text is from a passage that describes Jesus going into the Temple just before the Passover and, being infuriated with what he saw, he violently drove out the animal traders. In the last verse, the author of the Gospel of John "quotes" verse 10a[9a], but inverted the intended context by changing the meaning of a word. The Hebrew term קִנְאָה (***qin'AH***) is applied in the Hebrew Bible in three different contexts: **envy** [as in wanting what someone else has] (e.g., Ecclesiastes 4:4), **jealousy** [as in anger over suspicion of unfaithfulness] (e.g., Numbers 5:14), and **zeal** [as in extreme anger or extreme devotion] (e.g., Ezekiel 36:6). By using another meaning of the term, the author of the Gospel of John effects a change in context. According to the psalm, the envy of the Gentiles and its consequences to the Jewish people was on King David's mind. Yet, according to the "fulfillment" text, Jesus was consumed by his zeal to cleanse the Temple. So, once again, the "messianic prophecy" and "fulfillment" do not match.

Conclusion: Psalms 69:10a[9a] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

f. *The Messiah would bear reproach, for God's sake*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.A.2.f-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.A.2.f-1 – Psalms 69:10b[9b] and Romans 15:3

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 69:9b	**Romans 15:3**	**Psalm 69:10b**
For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.	For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.	For the envy of Your house has consumed me, and the humiliations of those who blaspheme You have fallen upon me.

Those who scoff at God direct their scorn at the ones who believe in Him, which is what has happened to the prophets:

> **Jeremiah 20:7-10 – (7) You enticed me, O Lord, and I was enticed, You overcame me and You prevailed. I have become a laughing-stock; everyone mocks me. (8) For whenever I speak, I cry out; I call out violence and spoil, for the word of the Lord has been scorn and mockery for me all day long. (9) Should I say; I will not mention Him, and I will no longer speak in His name, it would be in my heart like a burning fire, confined in my bones, and I wearied to contain it but was unable. (10) For I heard the slander of many, a gathering around; tell and let us tell about him: everyone who was friendly with me**

awaits my destruction. Perhaps he will be enticed and we will prevail against him, and we will wreak vengeance upon him.

The historical record is witness to the fact that the Jewish people have been mistreated in this fashion for many centuries just because they refused to accept the gods of the Gentile nations.

The "fulfillment" text, which includes a "quote" of verse 10b[9b], is taken from a passage wherein Paul preaches about the self-denial of Jesus on behalf of others. Yet, according to the New Testament, Jesus was very popular throughout his life except for the day on which he appeared before the Sanhedrin, when he was allegedly struck and humiliated. Unlike God's servants who were mistreated and humiliated for promoting God, Jesus was trying to promote himself and not God.

Conclusion: Psalms 69:10b[9b] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

g. *The Messiah's heart would be broken*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.A.2.g-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.A.2.g-1 – Psalms 69:21a[20a] and John 19:34

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 69:20a	**John 19:34**	**Psalms 69:21a**
Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: [and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.]	But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.	Humiliation has broken my heart and I have become ill; [I hoped for sympathy but there was none, and for comforters but I found none.]

King David expressed emotional anguish; his heart was broken, from either the personal humiliation he suffered at the hands of persecutors, or when he foresaw what will happen to Israel in a future exile.

The "fulfillment" text, taken from the passage that describes the aftermath of the crucifixion of Jesus, seems to imply that the Roman soldiers, who pierced the side of the body on the cross to see whether he had expired, injured (broke) his heart. *How can one realistically compare the emotional broken heart of the living King David, a figure of speech, with an alleged physically injured heart of the dead Jesus on the cross?* It is absurd!

Moreover, no such scenario involving מָשִׁיחַ (***mashi'ah***) is described anywhere in the Hebrew Bible. Of course, as a mortal human being, one

would expect מָשִׁיחַ to have emotions and react to situations in various ways – with joy when things are good, and perhaps with a broken heart when things go bad. *How can common human emotions be turned into "messianic prophecy"?*

Conclusion: Psalms 69:21a[20a] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

h. *The Messiah's disciples would fail him in his time of need*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.A.2.h-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.A.2.h-1 – Psalms 69:21b[20b] and Mark 14:33-41

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 69:20b	**Mark 14:33-41**	**Psalms 69:21b**
Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.	33. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; 34. And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. 35. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. 36. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt. 37. And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour? 38. Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak. 39. And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words. 40. And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him. 41. And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.	Humiliation has broken my heart and I have become ill; I hoped for sympathy but there was none, and for comforters but I found none.

King David, abandoned by human friends who would not come to comfort him, is left alone with only God as his source of comfort. Prophetically, King David could be describing his vision of Israel in exile, despised and rejected by the Gentile nations, with only God on whom they can rely.

The "fulfillment" text describes the scene of Jesus in Gethsemane, shortly after the "last supper". He already foretold at the supper that one of his disciples would betray him. At Gethsemane, he asked those disciples who accompanied him to wait and keep watch while he went to pray. Upon his return, he found them asleep, chided them, and went back to pray. He found them asleep again and not keeping watch over him when he returned. The scenario described in the "fulfillment" text has no relevance to the chagrin that King David expressed in verse 21b[20b] and, of course, the eventual outcomes of the two situations were different – King David survived and Jesus died.

Conclusion: Psalms 69:21b[20b] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

i. *The Messiah would be offered gall and vinegar*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.A.2.i-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.A.2.i-1 – Psalms 69:22a[21a] and Matthew 27:34

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 69:21a	**Matthew 27:34**	**Psalms 69:22a**
They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.	They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.	They put poison into my food and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

Building on the previous verse, King David described the cruelty of those who persecuted him. Not only did they not offer him comfort, they aggravated his hard lot. Using figurative language, he says that they brought him food that was laced with poison and vinegar to quench his thirst, meaning that they "added salt to his wounds". Prophetically, this could describe how he envisioned Israel will be treated in exile.

The "fulfillment" text comes from the crucifixion narrative. Aside from the fact that the outcomes of the scenarios were different – King David survived and Jesus died – the Gospel accounts of this particular scene are inconsistent. The "fulfillment" text, taken out of the Gospel of Matthew, describes Jesus being offered a drink made of vinegar mixed with gall; according to the Gospel of Mark, Jesus was offered wine mixed with myrrh (Mark 15:23); and according to the Gospel of Luke and the Gospel of John, Jesus was offered vinegar only (Luke 23:36; John 19:29-30). *Which of these Gospel accounts has it right?*

<u>Conclusion</u>: Psalms 69:22a[21a] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

j. *The Messiah would thirst*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.A.2.j -1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

<u>Table III.A.2.j-1</u> – Psalms 69:22b[21b] and John 19:28

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 69:21b	**John 19:28**	**Psalms 69:22b**
They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.	After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.	They put poison into my food and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

All living things and beings – plants, animals, and people – become thirsty. This is not something that will only happen to מָשִׁיחַ. This "messianic prophecy" and "fulfillment" pair is truly an act of desperation.

<u>Conclusion</u>: Psalms 69:22b[21b] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

k. *The potter's field would be uninhabited*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.A.2.k-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

<u>Table III.A.2.k-1</u> – Psalms 69:26[25] and Acts 1:16-20

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew
Psalms 89: 69:25	**Acts 1:16-20**	**Psalms 69:26**
Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in their tents.	16. Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. 17. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. 18. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. 19. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood. 20. For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.	May their palace be desolate; in their tents let there be no dweller.

The despicable behavior of his enemies, and his unjust suffering at their hands, cause King David to "lose his cool", as he passionately begs God not to let them go unpunished (verses 23-39[22-28]). In a prophetic sense, this could apply to Israel as King David envisions the fate of the Jewish people in exile and the suffering they would endure. In verse 26[25] he asks that the enemies' dwellings, their palaces and tents, remain desolate and uninhabited.

The "fulfillment" text consists of the disciple Peter's words to a crowd that gathered to pray following the alleged "resurrection" of Jesus. Peter connected the words of King David, verse 26[25], with the "Potter's Field", also known as the "Field of Blood" (Matthew 27:7-8). According to the Gospel accounts, this parcel of land was purchased by the chief priests with the 30 pieces of silver which they originally gave to Judas in return for leading them to Jesus (Matthew 26:15), and which he eventually returned to them (Matthew 27:3-5). Apparently, the chief priests did not feel this "blood money" belonged back in the treasury of the Temple, so they purchased the "Potter's field" and designated it as a burial place for unknown persons (Matthew 27:6-10). The Easton's Bible Dictionary lists the following definition for the term ***Aceldama*** (Acts 1:19):[12]

[12] M.G. Easton M.A., D.D., Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Third Edition, published by Thomas Nelson, 1897. Public Domain - http://bible.crosswalk.com/Dictionaries/EastonBibleDictionary/ebd.cgi?number=T63

Aceldama [N] [H] [S]

The name which the Jews gave in their proper tongue, i.e., in Aramaic, to the field which was purchased with the money which had been given to the betrayer of our Lord. The word means "field of blood." It was previously called "the potter's field" (Matthew 27:7,8; Acts 1:19), and was appropriated as the burial-place for strangers. It lies on a narrow level terrace on the south face of the valley of Hinnom. Its modern name is Hak ed-damm.

[N] indicates this entry was also found in Nave's Topical Bible
[H] indicates this entry was also found in Hitchcock's Bible Names
[S] indicates this entry was also found in Smith's Bible Dictionary

This parcel of land has been identified as part of the "Valley of Hinnom", also called by some the "Valley of Gehenna", an area that is located southwest of the city of Jerusalem, and which was used in biblical times as the place where the carcasses of the animals sacrificed in the Temple were burned. Those who are familiar with Jerusalem and its vicinity know that the "Valley of Hinnom" has turned into a beautiful garden frequented by many visitors to the area.[13] If the "fulfillment" text were actually accurate, the area in question would have been desolate today.

Conclusion: Psalms 69:26[25] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

IV. Summary

In this fifth in a series of essays on so-called "proof texts" in the Psalms, 11 such texts from Psalms 69, which are claimed to be Christian "messianic prophecies", along with their respective "fulfillment" texts from the New Testament, were investigated. The analysis addressed content, context, and correspondence between each pair of texts, in order to assess the validity of the claims. Cumulative results of all "messianic prophecy" and "fulfillment" pairs investigated thus far are summarized in Table IV-1. [Note: Results from the earlier essays are shown in a darker highlight, and current results are shown in a lighter highlight.]

Table IV-1 – Claimed "messianic prophecies" in Psalms 8, 16, 18, 27, 31, 34, 35, 38, 40, 41, 45, 55, 68, 69, 78, 80, and 89, and their "fulfillments"

Statement	Citations		Valid?[14]
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
Infants would give praise to the Messiah	Psalms 8:3[2]	Matthew 21:16	NO
The Messiah would be given authority over all things	Psalms 8:7[6]	Matthew 28:18	NO
The Messiah would be resurrected	Psalms 16:8-10a	Matthew 28:6	NO
The Messiah's body would not be subject to decay	Psalms 16:8-10b	Acts 13:35-37	NO
The Messiah would be exalted to the presence of God	Psalms 16:11	Acts 2:25-33	NO

[13] Examples: "Photos of Hell" - http://what-the-hell-is-hell.com/HellPhotos/
[14] A single entry indicates that the same answer applies to both "Prophecy" and "Fulfillment" claims. Two entries signify different answers for the "Prophecy" and "Fulfillment", respectively.

The Messiah would come for all people	Psalms 18:50[49]	Ephesians 3:4-6	NO
The Messiah's enemies would stumble and fall when they came for him	Psalms 27:2	John 18:3-6	NO
The Messiah would be accused by false witnesses	Psalms 27:12	Matthew 26:59-61	NO
None of the Messiah's bones would be broken	Psalms 34:21[20]	John 19:32-33	NO
There would be plots to kill the Messiah	Psalms 31:14[13]	Matthew 27:1	NO
There would be plots to kill the Messiah	Psalms 31:14[13]	Matthew 27:1	NO
The Messiah would be accused by false witnesses	Psalms 35:11	Mark 14:55-59	NO
The Messiah would be hated by many without cause	Psalms 35:19	John 18:19-23	NO
The Messiah would be silent before his accusers	Psalms 38:14-15[13-14]	Matthew 26:62-63	NO
The Messiah's offering of himself would replace all sacrifices	Psalms 40:7-9a[6-8a]	Hebrews 10:10-13	NO
The Messiah would say the scriptures were written of him	Psalms 40:7-9b[6-8b]	Luke 24:44	NO
The Messiah would come to do God's will	Psalms 40:8-9[7-8]	John 5:30	NO
The Messiah would not conceal his mission from the congregation	Psalms 40:10-11[9-10]	Luke 4:16-21	NO
The Messiah's betrayer would be a friend whom he broke bread with	Psalms 41:10[9]	Mark 14:17-18	NO
The Messiah would speak with a message of grace	Psalms 45:3[2]	Luke 4:22	? NO
The Messiah's throne would be everlasting	Psalms 45:7-8a[6-7a]	Luke 1:31-33	? NO
The Messiah would be God	Psalms 45:7-8b[6-7b]	Hebrews 1:8-9	NO
The Messiah would act with righteousness	Psalms 45:7-8c[6-7c]	John 5:30	? NO
The Messiah would be betrayed by a friend	Psalms 55:13-15[12-14]	Luke 22:47-48	NO
The Messiah would ascend into heaven	Psalms 68:19a[18a]	Luke 24:51	NO
The Messiah would give gifts to men	Psalms 68:19b[18b]	Matthew 10:1	NO
The Messiah would be hated by many without cause	Psalms 69:5[4]	Luke 23:13-22	NO
The Messiah would bear reproach, for God's sake	Psalms 69:8[7]	Matthew 26:65-67	NO
The Messiah would be rejected by the Jews	Psalms 69:9a[8a]	John 1:11	NO
The Messiah's brothers would disbelieve him	Psalms 69:9b[8b]	John 7:3-5	NO
The Messiah would be angered by disrespect toward the temple	Psalms 69:10a[9a]	John 2:13-17	NO
The Messiah would bear reproach, for God's sake	Psalms 69:10b[9b]	Romans 15:3	NO
The Messiah's heart would be broken	Psalms 69:21a[20a]	John 19:34	NO
The Messiah's disciples would fail him in his time of need	Psalms 69:21b[20b]	Mark 14:33-41	NO
The Messiah would be offered gall and vinegar	Psalms 69:22a[21a]	Matthew 27:34	NO
The Messiah would thirst	Psalms 69:22b[21b]	John 19:28	NO
The potter's field would be uninhabited	Psalms 69:26[25]	Acts 1:16-20	NO
The Messiah would speak in parables	Psalms 78:2	Matthew 13:34-35	NO
The Messiah would be at the right hand of God	Psalms 80:18[17]	Acts 5:31	NO
The Messiah would be a descendant of David	Psalms 89:4-5[3-4]	Matthew 1:1	? NO

The Messiah would call God his Father	Psalms 89:27[26]	Matthew 11:27	NO	
The Messiah would be God's "firstborn."	Psalms 89:28[27]	Mark 16:6	?	NO
The Messiah would be a descendant of David	Psalms 89:30[29]	Matthew 1:1	?	NO
The Messiah would be a descendant of David	Psalms 89:36-37[35-36]	Matthew 1:1	?	NO

As the sample of claimed Christian "messianic prophecy" and "fulfillment" pairs continues to increase, there are now 44 such pairs, the previously noted pattern becomes even better defined – they focus on Jesus, the central figure in the Christian messianic vision, not on the conditions that will prevail in the world due to his accomplishments.

Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms[1]
Part 6 - Psalms 102, 109, 118, 132

I. Introduction

This is the sixth in a series of essays in which claims by Christian missionaries concerning "messianic prophecies" in the Psalms are investigated. The first five essays covered the 44 claimed "messianic prophecies" in Psalms 8, 16, 18, 27, 31, 35, 38, 40, 41, 45, 55, 68, 69, 78, 80, and 89. [2,3,4,5,6]

This essay investigates eleven additional claims of "messianic prophecies" in the Christian "Old Testament" and their respective accounts of "fulfillment" in the New Testament, all of which are taken from the same ***reference list*** that was previously used.[7]

II. "Messianic Prophecy": Comparing Christian and Jewish Perspectives

This was covered in detail in Section II in the first essay of this series (please see footnote 2) and will not be repeated in this and the remaining essays.

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:
- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "h"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

[2] Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms, Part 1 – Psalms 8, 16, 18 - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt1.pdf

[3] Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms, Part 2 – Psalms 27, 31, 34, 35, 38 - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt2.pdf

[4] Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms, Part 3 – Psalms 40, 41, 45 - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt3.pdf

[5] Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms, Part 4 – Psalms 55, 68, 78, 80, and 89 – http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt4.pdf

[6] Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms, Part 5 – Psalms 69 – http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt5.pdf

[7] *Jesus is the Messiah: The Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled By Jesus Christ Ordered by Category* - http://contenderministries.org/prophecy/jesusmessiah2.php

III. ANALYSIS OF CLAIMED "MESSIANIC PROPHECIES" AND THEIR "FULFILLMENTS"

To say that a prophecy has been fulfilled means that the foretold event, condition, or situation has happened, and that one needs no longer await its completion or fulfillment. On the other hand, a prophecy that has not yet happened, or is yet to be completed, remains a prophecy not fulfilled.

The "messianic prophecies" claimed to be present in Psalms 102, 109, 118, and 132, along with the respective accounts of their "fulfillment" from the New Testament, are addressed in this essay. The analysis aims to determine whether any of these pairs of passages in the Christian "Old Testament" and New Testament qualify as a "messianic prophecy" and its "fulfillment", respectively.

A. Psalms 102

The *reference list* indicates that Psalms 102 contains two "messianic prophecies" that are "fulfilled" according to the New Testament, as shown in Table III.A-1.

Table III.A-1 – Claimed "Messianic Prophecies" and their "Fulfillments"

Statement	Citations[8]	
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"
The Messiah would be eternal	Psalms 102:26-28a[25-27a]	Colossians 1:17
The Messiah would be the creator of all	Psalms 102:26-28b[25-27b]	John 1:3

1. Overview

Following is a summary description of this psalm to help put its context into perspective.

AN EXILE'S PLAINT: Rashi identifies the speaker of the Psalm with Israel, the afflicted. Most all of the Most all of the commentators agree that the Psalm describes the dreadful state of Israel, suffering the suffering the agonies of exile. One gleam of hope pierces the enveloping darkness, and that is God's eternity, which kindles faith in Zion's restoration. He will not discard His people for ever. The day will come for the fulfillment of the premise that Jerusalem shall be the centre to which all nations will rally in His service.[9]

The superscription does not identify the author of this psalm, but alludes to the psalm's liturgical use. The psalm is appropriate for recital as a prayer for anyone beset by misfortune of any kind.

[8] In cases where verse numbers differ between the Hebrew Bible and the Christian "Old Testament", the citation shows the verse number in the Hebrew Bible followed by the verse number in the Christian "Old Testament" in brackets. Example: Psalms 102:26-28a[25-27a].
[9] *Soncino Books of the Bible – The Psalms*, Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, Editor, p. 328, The Soncino Press (1992)

2. Investigating claimed "Messianic Prophecies" [and "Fulfillments"]

a. *The Messiah would be eternal*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.A.2.a-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

<u>Table III.A.2.a-1</u> – Psalms 102:26-28a[25-27a] and Colossians 1:17

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 102:25-27a	**Colossians 1:17***	**Psalms 102:26-28a**
25. Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. 26. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: 27. But thou art the same, [and thy years shall have no end.]	[12. Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: 13. Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: 14. In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: 15. Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: 16. For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:] 17. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. [18. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. 19. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;]	26. In the beginning You founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. 27. They will perish but You will endure, and all of them will rot away like a garment; like raiment You will turn them over and they will pass away. 28. But You are He, [and Your years will not end.]

* The [bracketed] verses, Colossians 1:12-16,18-19, are included for clarifying context.

In this passage, the Psalmist speaks of God being eternal and unchanging. God created everything out of nothing (*ex nihilo*), and all creations are at His mercy; they cannot and will not outlast their Creator. These characteristics of God comprise a theme found throughout the Hebrew Bible, as the following passage demonstrates:

> **<u>Isaiah 48:12-13</u> – (12) Hearken to Me, O Jacob, and Israel, who was called by Me, I am He, I am first, yea I am last. (13) Even My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand measured the heavens with handbreadths; I call them, they stand together.**

The "fulfillment" text is taken from a passage in which Paul describes the supremacy of Jesus (the “Son”) as Messiah and as equal to the Creator (the “Father”), concepts that are contrary to what the Hebrew Bible teaches.

The passage from which the "fulfillment" text is drawn also contains an internal contradiction. The "fulfillment" text appears to claim that the Christian messiah, Jesus, was in existence before “all things”, yet in verses 13&15 of the passage it is stated that he was the "Son" and "firstborn", respectively (of the “Father”; verses 12&19). Verses 15-17 convey the notion that of all things created, being called "firstborn", Jesus was created first. Taking the phrase "all things" in the absolute sense creates a logical dilemma, that Jesus (the “Son”) brought both himself and the “Father” into being. In other words, since Jesus is "the firstborn of every creature" that came into existence, according to verse 15, everything else has to be referred to as "all (other) things" that were made by Jesus (the “Son”) as the agent of the “Father”. But, then, Jesus cannot be "eternal", since a "father-son" relationship is impossible between two entities that have always co-existed.

Conclusion: 102:26-28a[25-27a] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

b. *The Messiah would be the creator of all*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.A.2.b-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.A.2.b-1 – Psalms 102:26-28a[25-27a] and Colossians 1:17

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV “Old Testament” Translation	KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew
102:25-27b	John 1:3*	Psalms 102:26-28b
25. Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. 26. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: 27. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.	[1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2. The same was in the beginning with God.] 3. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. [4. In him was life; and the life was the light of men.]	26. In the beginning You founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. 27. They will perish but You will endure, and all of them will rot away like a garment; like raiment You will turn them over and they will pass away. 28. But You are He, and Your years will not end.

* The verses John 1:1-2,4 are included for clarifying context.

The explanation to the previous "messianic prophecy" and "fulfillment" pair applies here as well. The new "fulfillment" text, which is taken from a passage that seems to "define" the deity of Jesus, suffers from the same logical flaw as that which was encountered in the previous case.

Conclusion: 102:26-28b[25-27b] is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

B. Psalms 109

The *reference list* indicates that Psalms 109 contains five "messianic prophecies" that are "fulfilled" according to the New Testament, as shown in Table III.B-1.

Table III.B-1 – Claimed "Messianic Prophecies" and their "Fulfillments"

Statement	Citations	
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"
The Messiah would be accused by false witnesses	Psalms 109:2	John 18:29-30
The Messiah would pray for his enemies	Psalms 109:4	Luke 23:34
The Messiah's betrayer would have a short life	Psalms 109:8a	Acts 1:16-18
The Messiah's betrayer would be replaced	Psalms 109:8b	Acts 1:20-26
The Messiah would be mocked by people shaking their heads	Psalms 109:25	Mark 15:29-30

1. Overview

Following is a summary description of this psalm to help put its context into perspective.

> **A CRY FOR HELP: This Psalm tells of suffering under relentless persecution, and is to be compared to earlier Psalms of the same type, especially 25 and 69. Though there is no clue to the author's identity or the circumstances** [sic]**, it is presumed that David composed the Psalm while being pursued by Saul after having been the victim of treacherous slander. In verses 6-19 David lashes out at his enemies with a string of the most vehement curses. The singular form is used as he is primarily referring to his arch-enemy Doeg, the Edomite (Kimchi). Malbim and Hirsch, following a different line of thought, maintain that the maledictions are not spoken by the author against his persecutors, but express the evil wishes of the latter against the man they were hounding to death. This might account for the fact that the adversaries are in the plural, whereas the curses are directed against a subject in the singular. Moreover, in verse 28 the Psalmist explicitly prays, 'Let them curse, but bless Thou,' and it is natural to understand his words as referring to the imprecations in the Psalm.**[10]

Although the superscription attributes this psalm to King David, there is no consensus among the Jewish Sages on this. For the purpose of the present discussion it is assumed that King David is the author, and he pleads with God to be rescued from scheming maligners who arise against him (in a historical sense), or who will arise against Israel (in a prophetic sense).

[10] *Soncino Books of the Bible – The Psalms*, Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, Editor, p. 366, The Soncino Press (1992)

2. Investigating claimed "Messianic Prophecies" [and "Fulfillments"]

a. *The Messiah would be accused by false witnesses*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.B.2.a-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.B.2.a-1 – Psalms 109:2 and John 18:29-30

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew
Psalms 109:2	John 18:29-30	Psalms 109:2
For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue.	29. Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man? 30. They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.	For the mouth of a wicked man and the mouth of a deceitful man have opened upon me; they spoke with me with a lying tongue.

Similar scenarios were encountered in psalms already investigated (Psalms 27&35). The message conveyed in verse 2 is that, while in his presence, King David's enemies have shown him (false) friendliness in order to cause him to let down his guard, whereas on other occasions they spoke deceitfully against him.

The "fulfillment" text, which is taken from a passage that describes the scene of Jesus before Pontius Pilate, has the author of the Gospel of John comparing the complaints of King David with the situation surrounding the allegedly false accusations leveled against Jesus.

According to accounts in the New Testament, Jesus taught the following:

> **Luke 6:27-29(KJV) – (27) But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, (28) Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. (29) And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also.** [See also Matthew 5:43-44; Luke 6:35.]

Yet, it seems that some passages in this psalm were ignored in the process of superposing Jesus onto this psalm. In verses 6-20, King David launches into a tirade of curses against his enemies, in which he utilizes very strong language to request that they be punished:

> **Psalms 109:6-20 – (6) Set a wicked man over him, and let an adversary stand at his right hand. (7) When he is judged, let him emerge guilty, and let his prayer be accounted as a sin. (8) May his days be few, and may someone else take his office of dignity. (9) May his sons be orphans and his wife a widow. (10) May his sons wander, and [people] should ask and search from their ruins. (11) May**

a creditor search out all he has, and may strangers despoil his labor. (12) May he have none who extends kindness, and may no one be gracious to his orphans. (13) May his end be to be cut off; in another generation may their name be blotted out. (14) May the iniquity against his forefathers be remembered by the Lord, and may the sin against his mother not be erased. (15) May they be before the Lord constantly, and may He cut off their remembrance from the earth. (16) Because he did not remember to do kindness, and he pursued a poor and needy man, and a broken-hearted one, to kill [him]. (17) And he loved a curse, and it came upon him; and he did not desire a blessing, and it distanced itself from him. (18) And he donned a curse like his garment, and it came into his midst like water and into his bones like oil. (19) May it be to him as a garment with which he envelops himself and as a girdle with which he constantly girds himself. (20) This is the recompense of my adversaries from the Lord, and those who speak evil upon my soul.

Consequently, if this psalm were about Jesus, then the above outburst would also have to be attributed to him. *What happened to blessing those who curse you and turning the other cheek to the one who strikes you on one cheek?* Clearly, this would not be an example of the "*love your enemy*" that Jesus allegedly preached.

The other flaw in the combination of this "messianic prophecy" and "fulfillment" pair is that the eventual outcomes were different. Namely, King David survived the many plots against him, while Jesus wound up being crucified.

Conclusion: Psalms 109:2 is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

b. *The Messiah would pray for his enemies*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.B.2.b-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.B.2.b-1 – Psalms 109:4 and Luke 23:34

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 109:4	**Luke 23:34**	**Psalms 109:4**
For my love they are my adversaries: but I give myself unto prayer.	Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.	Instead of my love, they persecute me, but I am at prayer.

King David recollects how, when his adversaries were in distress, he was dedicated to their welfare to such an extent as if he had prayed for them (a similar situation is described in Psalms 35:13). As was noted above, however, when he saw how his enemies responded to his caring and kindness with cruelty, he cursed them (verses 6-20).

The "fulfillment" text is taken from a passage that describes the scene of the crucifixion. It indeed creates the impression that Jesus prayed on behalf of the Roman soldiers who crucified him by asking "the Father" to forgive them. If, as Christian doctrine proclaims, Jesus was God, *why did he have to ask "the Father" to forgive them? Why could he himself not forgive them?* Moreover, the "fulfillment" text is inconsistent with the curses found in verses 6-20 of the same psalm.

Conclusion: Psalms 109:4 is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

c. *The Messiah's betrayer would have a short life*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.B.2.c-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.B.2.c-1 – Psalms 109:8a and Acts 1:16-18

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 109:8a	**Acts 1:16-18**	**Psalms 109:8a**
Let his days be few; [and let another take his office.]	16. Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. 17. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. 18. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.	May his days be few, [and may someone else take his office of dignity.]

Wishing that his days be numbered, is one of the curses King David leveled against an enemy who persecuted him.

The "fulfillment" text assigns this punishment to Judas, the disciple who allegedly betrayed Jesus. The problem encountered here, as before, is that the context does not fit the rest of the psalm. The Hebrew Bible records the untimely death of several people who persecuted King David, such as Ahitophel (committed suicide; 2Samuel 17:23), Joab (killed by Benaiah; 1Kings 2:34), King Saul (committed suicide; 1Samuel 31:4), and two of King David's own sons, Absalom (killed by Joab; 2Samuel 18:24) and Adonijah (killed by Benaiah; 1Kings 2:25). Thus, considering the other problems the contents of this psalm present to Christian theology, it is meaningless to associate this curse with Judas committing suicide.

Conclusion: Psalms 109:8a is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

d. *The Messiah's betrayer would be replaced*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.B.2.d-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

<u>Table III.B.2.d-1</u> – Psalms 109:8b and Acts 1:20-26

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 109:8b	**Acts 1:20-26**	**Psalms 109:8b**
Let his days be few; and let another take his office.	20. For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take. 21. Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22. Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. 23. And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. 24. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, 25. That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. 26. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.	May his days be few, and may someone else take his office of dignity.

It has always been a common practice to name a replacement to an important position that became vacant upon the death of the one who had held that post. Thus, hoping that an enemy's days will be numbered because of God's punishment, King David also adds his request for someone else to fill that person's position.

The "fulfillment" text attempts to connect the account of Matthias' appointment as Judas' replacement to the discipleship with this part of King David's curse on his enemy. This scenario is afflicted with the same problems that plague the previous case.

<u>Conclusion</u>: Psalms 109:8b is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

e. *The Messiah would be mocked by people shaking their heads*

The relevant texts from the KJV "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.B.2.e-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.B.2.e-1 – Psalms 109:25 and Mark 15:29-30

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew
Psalms 109:25	Mark 15:29-30	Psalms 109:25
I became also a reproach unto them: when they looked upon me they shaked their heads.	29. And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, 30. Save thyself, and come down from the cross.	And I was a disgrace to them; they would see me, they would shake their head.

Having become an object of disdain to his enemies, King David describes how they would shake their heads in a contemptuous gesture as they crossed paths with him. He uses similar language elsewhere:

> **Psalms 22:8[7] - All those who see me will mock me; they will open their lip, they will shake their head.**

The "fulfillment" text is taken from a passage that describes the aftermath of the crucifixion before Jesus allegedly had his last breath. The problem, once again, is that King David survived these events and Jesus did not. Therefore, the two scenes depicted in this "messianic prophecy" and "fulfillment" pair are completely different and cannot be related to each other in this fashion.

Conclusion: Psalms 109:25 is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

C. Psalms 118

The *reference list* indicates that Psalms 118 contains two "messianic prophecies" that are "fulfilled" according to the New Testament, as shown in Table III.C-1.

Table III.C-1 – Claimed "Messianic Prophecies" and their "Fulfillments"

Statement	Citations	
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"
The Messiah would be the "stone" rejected by the Jews	Psalms 118:22	Matthew 21:42-43
The Messiah would come in the name of the Lord	Psalms 118:26	Matthew 21:9

1. Overview

Following is a summary description of this psalm to help put its context into perspective.

> **NATIONAL THANKSGIVING: A joyful proclamation of the people in the Temple on the occasion of the final redemption is the scene of this Psalm, and the feelings of gratitude which animated their hearts are expressed in glowing language. According to a second Rabbinic view, the Psalm was composed by David upon the death of Saul. It expresses his relief from the relentless pressure to which he had been subjected during Saul's reign (Kimchi).**[11]

The superscription does not identify the author of this psalm. The psalmist expresses Israel's gratitude and confidence as the people await the divine redemption from the oppression suffered in exile. This psalm is part of the collection of hymns of praise that comprise the Jewish liturgy known as the *Hallel*, which consists of selections from Psalms 113-118, and is recited on the three major festivals and on Hanukkah, as well as on other occasions.[12]

2. Investigating claimed "Messianic Prophecies" [and "Fulfillments"]

a. *The Messiah would be the "stone" rejected by the Jews*

The relevant texts from the King James Version (KJV) "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.C.2.a-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.C.2.a-1 – Psalms 118:22 and Matthew 21:42-43

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 118:22	**Matthew 21:42-43**	**Psalms 118:22**
The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.	42. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? 43. Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.	The stone that the builders rejected became a cornerstone.

According to Jewish tradition, the passage comprised of verses 19-25 was chanted while the procession entered the Temple in Jerusalem.

[11] *Soncino Books of the Bible – The Psalms*, Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, Editor, p. 389, The Soncino Press (1992)
[12] An abridged version of the *Hallel* is recited on new moons and on the last six days of Passover.

Our Sages have proposed several interpretations for verse 22. From a literal perspective, this stone could be the top stone that completes a building's edifice (see Zechariah 4:7), or the large cornerstone at a building's foundation that binds two layers at right angles to each other (see Isaiah 28:16; Jeremiah 51:26). In both cases, these stones occupy an important place in the structure. In the very next verse (verse 23), the psalmist credits this miraculous happening to divine intervention, sentiments that are echoed by Nehemiah upon completion of the wall around the city of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 6:16).

From a metaphoric perspective, this could refer to King David who was rejected by his own father and brothers when Samuel came to Jesse's home to anoint one of his sons as the next king of Israel.

Prophetically, this could be a metaphoric allusion to the nation of Israel, described as a rock (Genesis 49:24) yet despised and rejected by the Gentile nations, eventually being recognized by them as the cornerstone in God's plan for the world.

The "fulfillment" text comes from a passage that contains the Parable of the Landowner and Tenants, in which Jesus denounced the chief priests and Pharisees – Jesus being the cornerstone and the chief priests and Pharisees being the builders who rejected him. The next few verses in the psalm, where the psalmist calls for a national day of thanksgiving (for the redemption) and prayer (for continued support in the future), are problematic for Jesus since there are no accounts in the Gospels in which he makes such requests.

Conclusion: Psalms 118:22 is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

b. *The Messiah would come in the name of the Lord*

The relevant texts from the King James Version (KJV) "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.C.2.b-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.C.2.a-1 – Psalms 118:26 and Matthew 21:9

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew
Psalms 118:26	Matthew 21:9	Psalms 118:26
Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD.	And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.	Blessed be he who has come in the name of the Lord; we have blessed you in the name of the Lord.

Following the entrance of the procession, the service in the Temple commenced with the priests greeting each member of the procession with the words of verse 26 (see also Deuteronomy 21:5; Psalms 129:8).

The "fulfillment" text is drawn from a passage that describes the allegedly triumphant entry by Jesus into Jerusalem, where he is being greeted and lauded by the crowd that has gathered to welcome him. The author of the Gospel of Matthew, as well as the authors of the other three Gospels (Mark 11:9-10; Luke 19:37-38; John 12:13), apparently ignored the context of verse 26. Rather, the greeters were the multitudes (who were not the priests), and the one being greeted, the one who came "in the name of the Lord", was Jesus. *Will* מָשִׁיחַ (***mashi'ah***) *come in the name of the Lord?* He certainly will do that, as many others will also do likewise. *Does verse 26 foretell this?* It certainly does not!

Moreover, note the term "Hosanna" used in the "fulfillment" text with the meaning **praise**. Anyone who is familiar with the Jewish liturgy from the three festivals of pilgrimage knows about the הוֹשַׁעְנוֹת (***hosha'not***) that are recited on each day of סֻכּוֹת (***sukot***), the Festival of Tabernacles, which is part of the Fall season's Holy Days. The introductory stanza of this liturgy consists of four verses, each of which begins and ends with the phrase הוֹשַׁעְנָא (***hosha'na***) [or an alternate form, הוֹשַׁע נָא (***hosha na***)], which means ***please save***. Comparing this with the context of "fulfillment" text it is clear that the application of the term "Hosanna" makes no sense at all. Not only does the correct meaning of the word not fit the context of the passage, there is no indication in the surrounding text that the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem took place during the Festival of Tabernacles.

Conclusion: Psalms 118:26 is not a valid "messianic prophecy".

D. Psalms 132

The *reference list* indicates that Psalms 132 contains two "messianic prophecies" that are "fulfilled" according to the New Testament, as shown in Table III.D-1.

Table III.D-1 – Claimed "Messianic Prophecies" and their "Fulfillments"

Statement	Citations	
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"
The Messiah would be a descendant of David	Psalms 132:11	Matthew 1:1
The Messiah would be a descendant of David	Psalms 132:17	Matthew 1:1

1. Overview

Following is a summary description of this psalm to help put its context into perspective.

GOD'S PROMISE WILL BE FULFILLED: The Psalm is different from all other Songs of Ascents in length and style. Verses 8-10 reappear substantially in 2 Chron. 6:41f. at the end of Solomon's Prayer of Dedication and verses 7-14 point to its celebration of the solemn moment when the ark of the Law was brought into the Temple built by Solomon. Through this act, the Temple was dedicated to the presence of God in Israel's midst (Hirsch). Ibn Ezra and Kimchi connect this Psalm with events that occurred in the later days of David's reign (2 Sam. 24:18-25, 1 Chron. 21:18-20): A plague which had overrun Israel, killing thousands, then threatened Jerusalem. David was told to build an altar for sacrifices on the future Temple site to stem the destruction, but the identity of the site was unknown (verse 6). The Psalm also recollects David's pain upon learning that he was not to be the builder of the Temple and the zeal he nevertheless showed in his preparations for it.[13]

The superscription does not identify the author of this psalm. Rather, this psalm, which is one of the 15 Psalms of Ascent (Psalms 120-134), was dedicated by its composer to King David. Like Psalms 45&89, this psalm contains passages which some Jewish Sages have interpreted as messianic text, though others view them as historical.

2. Investigating claimed "Messianic Prophecies" [and "Fulfillments"]

a. *The Messiah would be a descendant of David*

The relevant texts from the King James Version (KJV) "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.D.2.a-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.D.2.a-1 – Psalms 132:11 and Matthew 1:1

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	**KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek**	**Jewish Translation from the Hebrew**
Psalms 132:11	**Matthew 1:1**	**Psalms 132:11**
The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.	The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.	The Lord has sworn to David in truth, from which He will never turn back, "Of the fruit of your body I shall seat upon your throne.

Verses 11-18 comprise God's response to the preceding prayer (verses 8-10). Specifically, verse 11 embodies several elements from the original promise God made to King David via the prophet Nathan:[14]

2Samuel 7:12-16 – (12) When your days are fulfilled, and you shall lie with your forefathers, then I will raise up your seed that shall issue from your body after you, and I will establish his kingdom. (13) He shall build a house for My Name,

[13] *Soncino Books of the Bible – The Psalms*, Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, Editor, p. 436, The Soncino Press (1992)
[14] A similar case was encountered in the investigation of "messianic prophecies" in Psalms 89. The complete analysis can be found in Section III.E.2.a of the essay listed at footnote 5.

and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. (14) I will be to him a father, and he shall be to Me a son; so that when he goes astray I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with afflictions of human beings. (15) And My mercy shall not depart from him; in the manner in which I withdrew it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. (16) And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you; your throne shall be established forever.

The heirs to King David's throne will all be his biological descendants and, therefore, mortal human beings. This promise can be viewed as both historical and messianic. Historically, this was fulfilled with King Solomon. As a messianic prophecy, this speaks of מָשִׁיחַ, who will be a biological descendant of King David.

The "fulfillment" text is the first verse in the New Testament, the preface to the genealogy listed in the Gospel of Matthew. The title of "son of David" is applied to Jesus more than a dozen times in the New Testament (e.g., Matthew 20:31; Mark 10:48; Luke 18:38), even though it is a false statement from the perspective of the Hebrew Bible, the Scripture in force throughout the lifetime of Jesus and for some years after his death.

According to Christian theology, Jesus did not have an earthly father. Yet, the Hebrew Bible teaches that blood rights, such as Tribal pedigree and the Davidic throne, are transmitted exclusively from a human father to his biological sons (e.g., Numbers 1:18), which rules out such transfer through the process of adoption. In fact, the psalmist uses the phrase מִפְּרִי בִטְנְךָ (***mi'PRI vitn**^{e}**CHA***), **from the fruit of your body**, in reference to King David's heirs to the throne. The Hebrew phrase פְּרִי־בֶטֶן (***PRI-VEten***), **fruit of the body**, appears in the Hebrew Bible 11 times (Genesis 30:2; Deuteronomy 7:13, 28:4,11,18,53, 30:9; Is 13:18; Micah 6:7; Psalms 127:3, 132:11), and is used exclusively in reference to a person's progeny, i.e., biological descendants. *Since Jesus did not have an earthly father how can he be the "fruit of King David's body"? How can Jesus be the "son of David"?*

Moreover, Jesus himself appears to deny that the "Christ" (the Greek/Christian term for "Messiah") would be a descendant from King David:

Matthew 22:41-45(KJV) – (41) While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, (42) Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. (43) He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, (44) The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? (45) If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? [See also Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44.]

So, if Jesus did not believe that מָשִׁיחַ will be a descendant of King David, it follows that he denied the need for the validation that מָשִׁיחַ is of Davidic

lineage. This situation creates a serious dilemma for Christianity since it contradicts the claim that Jesus is the Messiah by virtue of his ancestry and, thereby, is fulfilling Biblical prophecy.

Conclusion: Psalms 132:11 may be a valid "messianic prophecy", though it remains unfulfilled.

b. *The Messiah would be a descendant of David*

The relevant texts from the King James Version (KJV) "Old Testament" and New Testament, and the corresponding Jewish translation for reference purposes, are shown in Table III.D.2.b-1, with the respective relevant portions of the passages shown in highlighted form.

Table III.D.2.b-1 – Psalms 132:17 and Matthew 1:1

"Messianic Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
KJV "Old Testament" Translation	KJV New Testament Translation from the Greek	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew
Psalms 132:17	Matthew 1:1	Psalms 132:17
There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.	The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.	There I shall cause David's horn to sprout; I have set up a lamp for My anointed.

This verse, too, can be viewed from either a historical or a messianic perspective. Historically, verse 17 would still be speaking of establishing the Davidic dynasty through King David's son, King Solomon, and the other kings of Judah who followed. The lamp of God symbolizes eternity and, as applied here, it signifies the preservation of the dynasty. This extends the Davidic dynasty into the messianic era, when מָשִׁיחַ, who will be a biological descendant of King David, will occupy the throne.

Since the "fulfillment" text is the same as it was for the previous case, the same discussion applies.

Conclusion: Psalms 132:17 may be a valid "messianic prophecy", though it remains unfulfilled.

IV. Summary

In this sixth in a series of essays on so-called "proof texts" in the Psalms, 11 such texts from Psalms 102, 109, 118, and 132, which are claimed to be Christian "messianic prophecies", along with their respective "fulfillment" texts from the New Testament, were investigated. The analysis addressed content, context, and correspondence between each pair of texts, in order to assess the validity of the claims. Cumulative results of all "messianic prophecy" and "fulfillment" pairs investigated thus far are summarized in Table IV-1. [Note: Results from the earlier

essays are shown in a darker highlight, and current results are shown in a lighter highlight.]

Table IV-1 – Claimed "messianic prophecies" in Psalms 8, 16, 18, 27, 31, 34, 35, 38, 40, 41, 45, 55, 68, 69 78, 80, 89, 102, 109, 118, and 132, and their "fulfillments"

Statement	Citations		Valid?[15]	
	"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"		
Infants would give praise to the Messiah	Psalms 8:3[2]	Matthew 21:16	NO	
The Messiah would be given authority over all things	Psalms 8:7[6]	Matthew 28:18	NO	
The Messiah would be resurrected	Psalms 16:8-10a	Matthew 28:6	NO	
The Messiah's body would not be subject to decay	Psalms 16:8-10b	Acts 13:35-37	NO	
The Messiah would be exalted to the presence of God	Psalms 16:11	Acts 2:25-33	NO	
The Messiah would come for all people	Psalms 18:50[49]	Ephesians 3:4-6	NO	
The Messiah's enemies would stumble and fall when they came for him	Psalms 27:2	John 18:3-6	NO	
The Messiah would be accused by false witnesses	Psalms 27:12	Matthew 26:59-61	NO	
None of the Messiah's bones would be broken	Psalms 34:21[20]	John 19:32-33	NO	
There would be plots to kill the Messiah	Psalms 31:14[13]	Matthew 27:1	NO	
There would be plots to kill the Messiah	Psalms 31:14[13]	Matthew 27:1	NO	
The Messiah would be accused by false witnesses	Psalms 35:11	Mark 14:55-59	NO	
The Messiah would be hated by many without cause	Psalms 35:19	John 18:19-23	NO	
The Messiah would be silent before his accusers	Psalms 38:14-15[13-14]	Matthew 26:62-63	NO	
The Messiah's offering of himself would replace all sacrifices	Psalms 40:7-9a[6-8a]	Hebrews 10:10-13	NO	
The Messiah would say the scriptures were written of him	Psalms 40:7-9b[6-8b]	Luke 24:44	NO	
The Messiah would come to do God's will	Psalms 40:8-9[7-8]	John 5:30	NO	
The Messiah would not conceal his mission from the congregation	Psalms 40:10-11[9-10]	Luke 4:16-21	NO	
The Messiah's betrayer would be a friend whom he broke bread with	Psalms 41:10[9]	Mark 14:17-18	NO	
The Messiah would speak with a message of grace	Psalms 45:3[2]	Luke 4:22	?	NO
The Messiah's throne would be everlasting	Psalms 45:7-8a[6-7a]	Luke 1:31-33	?	NO
The Messiah would be God	Psalms 45:7-8b[6-7b]	Hebrews 1:8-9	NO	
The Messiah would act with righteousness	Psalms 45:7-8c[6-7c]	John 5:30	?	NO
The Messiah would be betrayed by a friend	Psalms 55:13-15[12-14]	Luke 22:47-48	NO	
The Messiah would ascend into heaven	Psalms 68:19a[18a]	Luke 24:51	NO	
The Messiah would give gifts to men	Psalms 68:19b[18b]	Matthew 10:1	NO	

[15] A single entry indicates that the same answer applies to both "Prophecy" and "Fulfillment" claims. Two entries signify different answers for the "Prophecy" and "Fulfillment", respectively.

The Messiah would be hated by many without cause	Psalms 69:5[4]	Luke 23:13-22	NO	
The Messiah would bear reproach, for God's sake	Psalms 69:8[7]	Matthew 26:65-67	NO	
The Messiah would be rejected by the Jews	Psalms 69:9a[8a]	John 1:11	NO	
The Messiah's brothers would disbelieve him	Psalms 69:9b[8b]	John 7:3-5	NO	
The Messiah would be angered by disrespect toward the temple	Psalms 69:10a[9a]	John 2:13-17	NO	
The Messiah would bear reproach, for God's sake	Psalms 69:10b[9b]	Romans 15:3	NO	
The Messiah's heart would be broken	Psalms 69:21a[20a]	John 19:34	NO	
The Messiah's disciples would fail him in his time of need	Psalms 69:21b[20b]	Mark 14:33-41	NO	
The Messiah would be offered gall and vinegar	Psalms 69:22a[21a]	Matthew 27:34	NO	
The Messiah would thirst	Psalms 69:22b[21b]	John 19:28	NO	
The potter's field would be uninhabited	Psalms 69:26[25]	Acts 1:16-20	NO	
The Messiah would speak in parables	Psalms 78:2	Matthew 13:34-35	NO	
The Messiah would be at the right hand of God	Psalms 80:18[17]	Acts 5:31	NO	
The Messiah would be a descendant of David	Psalms 89:4-5[3-4]	Matthew 1:1	?	NO
The Messiah would call God his Father	Psalms 89:27[26]	Matthew 11:27	NO	
The Messiah would be God's "firstborn."	Psalms 89:28[27]	Mark 16:6	?	NO
The Messiah would be a descendant of David	Psalms 89:30[29]	Matthew 1:1	?	NO
The Messiah would be a descendant of David	Psalms 89:36-37[35-36]	Matthew 1:1	?	NO
The Messiah would be eternal	Psalms 102:26-28a[25-27a]	Colossians 1:17	NO	
The Messiah would be the creator of all	Psalms 102:26-28b[25-27b]	John 1:3	NO	
The Messiah would be accused by false witnesses	Psalms 109:2	John 18:29-30	NO	
The Messiah would pray for his enemies	Psalms 109:4	Luke 23:34	NO	
The Messiah's betrayer would have a short life	Psalms 109:8a	Acts 1:16-18	NO	
The Messiah's betrayer would be replaced	Psalms 109:8b	Acts 1:20-26	NO	
The Messiah would be mocked by people shaking their heads	Psalms 109:25	Mark 15:29-30	NO	
The Messiah would be the "stone" rejected by the Jews	Psalms 118:22	Matthew 21:42-43	NO	
The Messiah would come in the name of the Lord	Psalms 118:26	Matthew 21:9	NO	
The Messiah would be a descendant of David	Psalms 132:11	Matthew 1:1	?	NO
The Messiah would be a descendant of David	Psalms 132:17	Matthew 1:1	?	NO

As the sample of claimed Christian "messianic prophecy" and "fulfillment" pairs continues to increase, there are now 55 such pairs, the previously noted pattern becomes even better defined – they focus on Jesus, the central figure in the

Christian messianic vision, not on the conditions that will prevail in the world due to his accomplishments.

DEBUNKING "PROOF TEXTS" FROM THE PSALMS[1]
PART 7 – THE "BIG PICTURE"

I. INTRODUCTION

In a series of six essays, a total of 55 claimed Christian "messianic prophecies" in the Psalms and their respective "fulfillments" in the New Testament were investigated, analyzed in detail, and refuted. [2,3,4,5,6,7] This represents 18% of the 312 “messianic prophecy” and “fulfillment text” pairs presently identified in the *reference list* that was used in this focused investigation.[8] Moreover, the analysis of these 55 claimed Christian “messianic prophecies” confirmed the pattern alluded to in Part 1. Namely, that the “focus” of Christian “messianic prophecy” is the Christian Messiah, Jesus.

Considering the differences between Judaism’s and Christianity’s messianic visions, it is worthwhile to take a step back and look at the bigger picture to see how these two paradigms compare.

This essay presents overviews of Judaism’s and Christianity’s messianic visions followed by an analytical comparison of these two messianic paradigms.

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:
- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as “h̲”
  - The letter כ is transliterated as “ch”
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as “k”
  - The letter ק is transliterated as “q”
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted “e” following the consonant
  - There is no “doubling” of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

[2] Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms, Part 1 – Psalms 8, 16, 18 - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt1.pdf

[3] Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms, Part 2 – Psalms 27, 31, 34, 35, 38 - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt2.pdf

[4] Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms, Part 3 – Psalms 40, 41, 45 - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt3.pdf

[5] Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms, Part 4 – Psalms 55, 68, 78, 80, and 89 – http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt4.pdf

[6] Debunking “Proof Texts” from the Psalms, Part 5 – Psalms 69 – http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt5.pdf

[7] Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms, Part 6 – Psalms 102, 109, 118, and 132 – http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt6.pdf

[8] *Jesus is the Messiah: The Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled By Jesus Christ Ordered by Category* - http://contenderministries.org/prophecy/jesusmessiah2.php

II. JUDAISM'S MESSIANIC VISION

The Jewish messianic vision is an original concept at the heart of traditional Judaism, and the dream of an eventual redemption is one of its foundations. The Hebrew phrase אַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים (***a<u>h</u>ARIT ha'yAMIM***), **the end of days**, that is often associated with a future blissful era known in Judaism as the "messianic era", appears in the Hebrew Bible as early as Genesis 49:1, where Jacob summons his sons in order to bestow his blessings upon them. This chapter and the blessing of Judah in particular (Genesis 49:8-12), could be viewed as the cornerstone of traditional Judaism's messianic paradigm. The full picture of the Jewish messianic vision was developed primarily through the writings of the prophets.

The messianic paradigm of traditional Judaism consists of two main components:

- ✡ **The central figure, מָשִׁיחַ (*mASHI'a<u>h</u>*), who will be in the leadership role, and whose actions will result in major changes to world conditions**
- ✡ **The "messianic agenda", which consists of the "action items" (the "messianic prophecies" of Judaism) expected to be executed and completed for the messianic era to be a reality**

The following sections provide a closer look at each of these two items.

A. Judaism's מָשִׁיחַ

מָשִׁיחַ, the anointed one, is the individual whom the Jewish people are awaiting. Although he is the central figure in it, the Jewish messianic vision is not focused on him; rather, it addresses his accomplishments. The actions of מָשִׁיחַ will induce changes in the real world that will transform it into the picture envisioned by the prophets.

Few details are recorded in the Hebrew Bible about מָשִׁיחַ in terms of specific descriptions of his physical characteristics and attributes. In fact, of its 39 applications in the Hebrew Bible, the term מָשִׁיחַ is <u>never</u> used in connection with the promised future leader of Israel. One possible reason for this is that, starting around the first century B.C.E., the Jewish messianic paradigm experienced a significant transformation. It shifted away from the temporal idea of a future blissful era, אַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים, and evolved into the notion of a future mortal leader who will redeem Israel from the oppression the people had been suffering in exile and from enemies who occupied the Holy Land. It was during this time frame that the modern title מָשִׁיחַ was adopted as the common reference to this individual, who was expected to be the next occupant of the throne of King David. An interesting by-product of this phenomenon has been that, once this concept took hold, various individuals have appeared and proclaimed themselves, or were proclaimed by others, to be this awaited redeemer.

The information available in the Hebrew Bible spells out the requirements which a legitimate candidate for the "job" of מָשִׁיחַ must satisfy:

- ✡ **He must be a biological descendant, the seed (זֶרַע [*ZERa*]), of King David** (Isaiah 11:1; Ezekiel 37:24-25)
- ✡ **His lineage to King David must pass through King Solomon** (2Samuel 7:12-16; 1Kings 8:18-20)
- ✡ **He must be a Jew and Jewish** (Deuteronomy 17:15,18-20)

It follows from these requirements that מָשִׁיחַ must be born of earthly parents – his biological father will transmit to him the required pedigree - the lineage to King David, and his biological mother will provide him with his identity as a Jew. While there are bound to be scores of individuals who satisfy these requirements, this does not guarantee that any one of them will actually be מָשִׁיחַ – they are merely qualified candidates for the "job". In order to be identified and declared as מָשִׁיחַ, a qualified candidate will have to execute and complete the "messianic agenda" as part of his sovereignty.

B. Judaism's "Messianic Agenda"

The messianic vision of Judaism, which was developed primarily through the writings of the prophets, has as its centerpiece a "messianic agenda". This "messianic agenda" consists of prophetic statements which describe, at various level of detail, the conditions that will prevail in the messianic era. The items on the "messianic agenda" comprise the collection of "messianic prophecies" in traditional Judaism. Table II.B-1 shows a list of the most significant "messianic prophecies" of Judaism found in the Hebrew Bible.[9]

Table II.B-1 – "Messianic prophecies" of Judaism

#	Statement	Sample Citations[10]	Fulfilled?[11]
1	The appearance of Elijah the prophet will herald the arrival of מָשִׁיחַ	Malachi 3:23-24[4:5-6]	**NO**
2	There will prevail a universal knowledge and recognition of God	Isaiah 11:9; Zechariah 14:9	**NO**
3	There will be a peaceful coexistence of all nations in the world	Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3-4	**NO**
4	All weapons will be destroyed	Ezekiel 39:9,12	**NO**

[9] This list is not exhaustive. It contains those items on which there is relatively uniform consensus within traditional Judaism.

[10] In most cases, there are multiple sources of which only a sample is cited. Where verse numbers differ between the Hebrew Bible and the Christian "Old Testament", the citation shows the (chapter and) verse number in the Hebrew Bible first, followed by the (chapter and) verse number in the Christian "Old Testament" in brackets. Example: Malachi 3:23-24[4:5-6].

[11] A prophecy has been fulfilled when the foretold event, condition, or situation has happened, and that one needs no longer await its completion or fulfillment. On the other hand, a prophecy that has not yet happened, or is yet to be completed, remains a prophecy not fulfilled.

5	There will be an end to evil	Zephaniah 3:13; Malachi 3:19	**NO**
6	There will be an end to disease and death	Isaiah 25:8, 35:5-6	**NO**
7	The will be no more famine	Ezekiel 36:29-30	**NO**
8	Predatory animals will no longer seek prey	Isaiah 11:6-7, 65:25	**NO**
9	Part (the outlet) of the Nile River in Egypt will run dry	Isaiah 11:15	**NO**
10	All exiled Jewish people (12 Tribes) will be repatriated to Israel	Isaiah 11:11-12; Jeremiah 23:7-8	**NO**
11	"Judah" and "Israel" will be reunited into one people	Isaiah 11:13; Ezekiel 37:16-22	**NO**
12	The Third Temple will be built in Jerusalem	Isaiah 33:20; Ezekiel 37:26-28	**NO**
13	All Temple worship rituals, including sacrifices, will resume	Ezekiel Chapters 40-48	**NO**
14	The dead will be resurrected	Isaiah 26:19; Ezekiel 37:12-13	**NO**
15	Prophecy will return	Joel 3:1; Malachi 3:23[4:5]	**NO**
16	The Davidic dynasty will be revitalized with מָשִׁיחַ and his sons	Ezekiel 46:16-17; Daniel 7:13-14	**NO**
17	Each Tribe of Israel will receive and settle its inherited land	Ezekiel 47:13-14, 48:1-70	**NO**
18	Jewish Law will be the Law of the Land in Israel	Isaiah 11:2-5; Jeremiah 33:15	**NO**
19	Israel will be the center of all world (political) governments	Isaiah 11:10, 42:6; 60:3	**NO**
20	Israel will be the spiritual center of the world	Isaiah 2:2-3; Zechariah 8:23	**NO**
21	The Gentile nations will recognize they have been wrong	Isaiah 53:1-8; Micah 7:15-16	**NO**
22	The Gentile nations will help the Jewish people	Isaiah 60:5-6,10-12	**NO**
23	The Gentile nations will come to Jerusalem to celebrate Sukot (Festival of Tabernacles)	Zechariah 14:16	**NO**
24	The trees of Israel will yield their fruits on a monthly basis	Ezekiel 47:12	**NO**

As is evident from this collection of "messianic prophecies", they generally describe the conditions that will prevail during some future period known as the messianic era – they represent the output from a nation that was longing for a better life in a better world. The entire collection of Judaism's "messianic prophecies" is considered to be exhaustive and exclusive, which means that, when they are fulfilled, it will not require "faith" to experience the impact of their presence – everyone will know it.

III. CHRISTIANITY'S MESSIANIC VISION

Although Christianity adopted Judaism's idea that the Messiah will be a descendant of King David, the Christian messianic paradigm is inconsistent with its Jewish counterpart in all other aspects, as will be demonstrated in Section IV.

The common messianic paradigm of Christianity consists of two main components:

- ✟ **The central figure, Jesus, already came once in fulfillment of prophetic statements in the Christian "Old Testament", and will return at a future time (the "Second Coming")**
- ✟ **The "messianic prophecies" that were fulfilled by Jesus in his "First Coming"**

The following sections provide a closer look at each of these two items.

A. Christianity's Messiah – Jesus

The central figure of the Christian messianic vision is Jesus of Nazareth. The most striking feature of Christianity's messianic paradigm is that, by design (and unlike Judaism's), it is entirely focused on the central figure, Jesus of Nazareth, who is referred to in the Greek Testament by the title **Ιησούς Χριστός** (***Iesous Christos***), or **Jesus Christ** (Jesus the Messiah – the Anglicized version of the Greek name and title).

According to Christian theology, the nature and mission of the Messiah is that he is both Lord and Savior:

- ✟ **Jesus is divine since he has always existed as part of the divine godhead**[12] (John 1:1-2)
- ✟ **Jesus was "sent to earth" in the form of a man (God manifest in the flesh) via the "Virgin Birth", thus making him the son of God** (Matthew 1:23; Mark 1:1)
- ✟ **Jesus came as the Messiah in order to redeem (or save) humanity by removing from his followers the stain of the "Original Sin" through his sacrificial death on the cross** (2Timothy 1:9-10; 1John 4:14)
- ✟ **In his "Second Coming", Jesus will reign over the Kingdom of Heaven** (Matthew 5:19, 7:21; Hebrews 9:28)

B. Christianity's "Messianic Prophecies"

According to Christian theology, Jesus, in his role as Lord and Savior, fulfilled all the prophecies that were spoken of him in the Christian "Old Testament". These "messianic prophecies" consist of passages, single verses, or even just portions of a verse in the Christian "Old Testament", and the same is true of their respective "fulfillment texts" in the New Testament. The list of the 55 "messianic prophecy" and "fulfillment" pairs investigated in the previous six essays typifies the contents of the complete *reference list* (see footnote 8). The results of the analysis are reproduced in Table III.B-1 (sequence numbers were added for clarification).

[12] Though some denominations do not accept the notion of a triune godhead, the overwhelming majority of Christians adhere to the doctrine of the Trinity.

<u>Table III.B-1</u> – The "messianic prophecies" of Christianity in Psalms 8, 16, 18, 27, 31, 34, 35, 38, 40, 41, 45, 55, 68, 69 78, 80, 89, 102, 109, 118, and 132, their "fulfillments" and validity

#	Statement	Citations		Valid?[13]
		"Prophecy"	"Fulfillment"	
1	Infants would give praise to the Messiah	Psalms 8:3[2]	Matthew 21:16	NO
2	The Messiah would be given authority over all things	Psalms 8:7[6]	Matthew 28:18	NO
3	The Messiah would be resurrected	Psalms 16:8-10a	Matthew 28:6	NO
4	The Messiah's body would not be subject to decay	Psalms 16:8-10b	Acts 13:35-37	NO
5	The Messiah would be exalted to the presence of God	Psalms 16:11	Acts 2:25-33	NO
6	The Messiah would come for all people	Psalms 18:50[49]	Ephesians 3:4-6	NO
7	The Messiah's enemies would stumble and fall when they came for him	Psalms 27:2	John 18:3-6	NO
8	The Messiah would be accused by false witnesses	Psalms 27:12	Matthew 26:59-61	NO
9	None of the Messiah's bones would be broken	Psalms 34:21[20]	John 19:32-33	NO
10	There would be plots to kill the Messiah	Psalms 31:14[13]	Matthew 27:1	NO
11	There would be plots to kill the Messiah	Psalms 31:14[13]	Matthew 27:1	NO
12	The Messiah would be accused by false witnesses	Psalms 35:11	Mark 14:55-59	NO
13	The Messiah would be hated by many without cause	Psalms 35:19	John 18:19-23	NO
14	The Messiah would be silent before his accusers	Psalms 38:14-15[13-14]	Matthew 26:62-63	NO
15	The Messiah's offering of himself would replace all sacrifices	Psalms 40:7-9a[6-8a]	Hebrews 10:10-13	NO
16	The Messiah would say the scriptures were written of him	Psalms 40:7-9b[6-8b]	Luke 24:44	NO
17	The Messiah would come to do God's will	Psalms 40:8-9[7-8]	John 5:30	NO
18	The Messiah would not conceal his mission from the congregation	Psalms 40:10-11[9-10]	Luke 4:16-21	NO
19	The Messiah's betrayer would be a friend whom he broke bread with	Psalms 41:10[9]	Mark 14:17-18	NO
20	The Messiah would speak with a message of grace	Psalms 45:3[2]	Luke 4:22	? / NO
21	The Messiah's throne would be everlasting	Psalms 45:7-8a[6-7a]	Luke 1:31-33	? / NO
22	The Messiah would be God	Psalms 45:7-8b[6-7b]	Hebrews 1:8-9	NO
23	The Messiah would act with righteousness	Psalms 45:7-8c[6-7c]	John 5:30	? / NO
24	The Messiah would be betrayed by a friend	Psalms 55:13-15[12-14]	Luke 22:47-48	NO
25	The Messiah would ascend into heaven	Psalms 68:19a[18a]	Luke 24:51	NO

[13] A single entry indicates that the same answer applies to both "Prophecy" and "Fulfillment" claims. Two entries signify different answers for the "Prophecy" and "Fulfillment", respectively.

26	The Messiah would give gifts to men	Psalms 68:19b[18b]	Matthew 10:1		NO
27	The Messiah would be hated by many without cause	Psalms 69:5[4]	Luke 23:13-22		NO
28	The Messiah would bear reproach, for God's sake	Psalms 69:8[7]	Matthew 26:65-67		NO
29	The Messiah would be rejected by the Jews	Psalms 69:9a[8a]	John 1:11		NO
30	The Messiah's brothers would disbelieve him	Psalms 69:9b[8b]	John 7:3-5		NO
31	The Messiah would be angered by disrespect toward the temple	Psalms 69:10a[9a]	John 2:13-17		NO
32	The Messiah would bear reproach, for God's sake	Psalms 69:10b[9b]	Romans 15:3		NO
33	The Messiah's heart would be broken	Psalms 69:21a[20a]	John 19:34		NO
34	The Messiah's disciples would fail him in his time of need	Psalms 69:21b[20b]	Mark 14:33-41		NO
35	The Messiah would be offered gall and vinegar	Psalms 69:22a[21a]	Matthew 27:34		NO
36	The Messiah would thirst	Psalms 69:22b[21b]	John 19:28		NO
37	The potter's field would be uninhabited	Psalms 69:26[25]	Acts 1:16-20		NO
38	The Messiah would speak in parables	Psalms 78:2	Matthew 13:34-35		NO
39	The Messiah would be at the right hand of God	Psalms 80:18[17]	Acts 5:31		NO
40	The Messiah would be a descendant of David	Psalms 89:4-5[3-4]	Matthew 1:1	?	NO
41	The Messiah would call God his Father	Psalms 89:27[26]	Matthew 11:27		NO
42	The Messiah would be God's "firstborn."	Psalms 89:28[27]	Mark 16:6	?	NO
43	The Messiah would be a descendant of David	Psalms 89:30[29]	Matthew 1:1	?	NO
44	The Messiah would be a descendant of David	Psalms 89:36-37[35-36]	Matthew 1:1	?	NO
45	The Messiah would be eternal	Psalms 102:26-28a[25-27a]	Colossians 1:17		NO
46	The Messiah would be the creator of all	Psalms 102:26-28b[25-27b]	John 1:3		NO
47	The Messiah would be accused by false witnesses	Psalms 109:2	John 18:29-30		NO
48	The Messiah would pray for his enemies	Psalms 109:4	Luke 23:34		NO
49	The Messiah's betrayer would have a short life	Psalms 109:8a	Acts 1:16-18		NO
50	The Messiah's betrayer would be replaced	Psalms 109:8b	Acts 1:20-26		NO
51	The Messiah would be mocked by people shaking their heads	Psalms 109:25	Mark 15:29-30		NO
52	The Messiah would be the "stone" rejected by the Jews	Psalms 118:22	Matthew 21:42-43		NO
53	The Messiah would come in the name of the Lord	Psalms 118:26	Matthew 21:9		NO
54	The Messiah would be a descendant of David	Psalms 132:11	Matthew 1:1	?	NO
55	The Messiah would be a descendant of David	Psalms 132:17	Matthew 1:1	?	NO

As is evident from the above list, the "messianic prophecies" of Christianity are Messiah-centric, i.e., they deal with the Messiah's origin, his attributes, his personal life's ordeals, and his death and resurrection. This is likely to have resulted from the belief by Christians that God, via His direct intervention in human history, made His will and purpose known to mankind when He sent His "son", Jesus, to fulfill these "messianic prophecies". Thus, for Christians, the concept of "messianic prophecy" is the product of a "new revelation", and that the last word on the meaning of specific "messianic prophecies" in the Christian "Old Testament", accordingly, is found in the New Testament and in Jesus himself. For Christians, the Messiah already came and fulfilled all these "messianic prophecies", and they are now awaiting his "Second Coming".

IV. THE TWO MESSIANIC VISIONS SIDE-BY-SIDE: HOW DO THEY COMPARE?

The two major components of the two messianic paradigms are next contrasted via several elements that characterize significant attributes and functions. These elements are compared against each other, and Christianity's paradigm is also compared against the respective accounts in the Hebrew Bible.

A. Judaism's מָשִׁיחַ versus Christianity's Jesus

Items that characterize the respective central figures of the Jewish and Christian messianic visions are compared in Table IV.A-1.

Table IV.A-1 – Comparing the central figures

Attribute	Judaism's (✡) מָשִׁיחַ	Christianity's (✞) Messiah, Jesus	Compatible …	
			with each other	✞ - with Hebrew Bible*
Pedigree	Will be a bloodline descendant of King David, born of earthly parents	Was born of a virgin who conceived from the Holy Spirit	**NO**	**NO**
Birthplace	Not specified	Bethlehem	**NO**	**NO**
Nature	Will be a mortal human	Is the divine son of God	**NO**	**NO**
Status	Will be served and honored by all nations	Is worshipped	**NO**	**NO**
Function	Will be a righteous king who will redeem and restore Israel	Served as a sin sacrifice to atone for the sins of mankind	**NO**	**NO**
Reign	Earthly kingdom	None (1st advent). Kingdom of heaven (2nd advent)	**NO**	**NO**
Family Status	Will marry and have children	Was not married and did not father children	**NO**	**NO**
Advent	Will make one appearance, which is still being awaited	Came once, died, resurrected, and will come again	**NO**	**NO**

* Judaism's perspective is compatible with the Hebrew Bible by default

This comparison demonstrates that the central figures of Judaism's messianic vision (מָשִׁיחַ) and Christianity's messianic vision (Jesus) are incompatible. Moreover, it also shows that Jesus does not possess the few attributes of מָשִׁיחַ that are specified in the Hebrew Bible.

B. Judaism's "Messianic Agenda" versus Christianity's "Messianic Prophecies"

Items that characterize the respective prophetic components of the Jewish and Christian messianic visions are compared in Table IV.B-1.

Table IV.B-1 – Comparing the prophetic components

Characteristic	Judaism's (✡) "Messianic Agenda"	Christianity's (✞) "Messianic Prophecies"	Compatible … with each other	Compatible … ✞ - with Hebrew Bible*
Number	Between two- and three-dozen	Over three hundred	**NO**	**NO**
Function	To describe the conditions that will prevail in the messianic era	To describe Jesus, his life's ordeals, and to glorify him	**NO**	**NO**
Status	Unfulfilled. To be executed and completed by the מָשִׁיחַ	Fulfilled by Jesus in his "First Coming"	**NO**	**NO**
Validation	Upon completion, the resultant changes in the world will be real – perceptible, tangible, and "measurable"	Their fulfillment and resultant changes must be accepted on faith	**NO**	**NO**

* Judaism's perspective is compatible with the Hebrew Bible by default

This comparison demonstrates that Judaism's "messianic agenda" and Christianity's "messianic prophecies" are incompatible. Moreover, it also shows that the prophetic component of the Christian messianic vision is generally incompatible with accounts contained in the Hebrew Bible.

C. General observations

Beyond the results obtained from these detailed comparisons, several additional points of interest concerning the two messianic paradigms are worth noting:

- ➔ **The "certainty of the end" is, at least conceptually, a common idea in both Judaism and Christianity. However, a major difference that sets apart the two messianic visions is that, in Judaism, history moves toward the coming of מָשִׁיחַ, whereas, in Christianity, the belief is that the Messiah has already come and the doctrinal focus is on the fundamental belief rather on the Messiah's return.**
- ➔ **The term "Messiah" has different definitions as used in Judaism and in Christianity. "מָשִׁיחַ"and how it is applied is original to Judaism, whereas "Messiah", as applied in Christianity, has its origin in pagan beliefs.**

- **The Davidic lineage of מָשִׁיחַ is a biblical requirement in Judaism, whereas in Christianity, the relationship of the Messiah to King David is viewed as a messianic prophecy.**
- **The significant disparity in the number of Judaism's "messianic agenda" items and Christianity's "(fulfilled) messianic prophecies" is due, in part, to the method of enumeration. In Judaism's messianic vision, all occasions in the Hebrew Bible where the same "messianic agenda" item is referenced are counted as one item. In Christianity's messianic vision, each reference in the Christian "Old Testament" to the same "messianic prophecy" is counted as a separate item. For example, in the *reference list* (see footnote 8), 15 cited references to Jesus being God's son (including "firstborn") are counted as 15 "messianic prophecies", 13 cited references to Jesus being a descendant of King David are counted as 13 "messianic prophecies", 12 cited references to Jesus bearing the sins of man are counted as 12 "messianic prophecies, etc. Right here are 80 references that should be only 6. This is artificial "inflation"!**
- **The invention of a "Second Coming" and adding it to Christianity's messianic paradigm is a *de facto* concession by Christians that Jesus failed to bring about the blissful era that is foretold in the Hebrew Bible. It is unbiblical!**
- **The Christian messianic vision relies heavily on the "art of circular reasoning". In other words, Jesus can be positively identified as the subject of these "messianic prophecies" (i.e., "proof texts") only if one believes in him in the first place (i.e., in what is written about him in the New Testament). This is not at all a "proof"!**

Although the two messianic paradigms may bear some superficial structural resemblance, a close examination of their respective components demonstrates their significant differences and incompatibility.

V. SUMMARY

The results obtained from investigating the validity of 55 claimed Christian "messianic prophecies" in a collection of Psalms, along with their claimed respective "fulfillments" in the New Testament, reveal a significant disparity between Judaism's and Christianity's views on "messianic prophecy". The purpose of the analysis presented in this essay was to get at the root of this disparity by examining the general framework of the respective messianic visions.

A comparison of the basic elements within each of the two main components that comprise Judaism's and Christianity's messianic paradigms – the central figure and the prophetic texts – illustrates how they are inconsistent and incompatible with each other. Moreover, since Judaism's messianic paradigm is based on the Hebrew Bible, it follows that Christianity's messianic paradigm, being incompatible with that of Judaism, is incongruous with the Hebrew Bible as well. Therefore, it is reasonable to posit that the incongruity of the two views on "messianic prophecy" is related to their respective genesis.

Judaism's messianic paradigm evolved within the Hebrew Bible and is focused, via prophetic statements, on a future era of happiness and joy for Israel in a better world, not on the central figure who will lead Israel at that time, and whose specific identity is not disclosed within the Hebrew Bible. By contrast, Christianity's messianic paradigm was designed and recorded in the New Testament *ex post*

facto, i.e., after the fact – after the canon of the Hebrew Bible was sealed and long after the advent of Jesus. So that, with its central figure identified as Jesus, it was an easy task for the authors of the New Testament to complete the picture. They hunted through the Christian "Old Testament" for passages that could be construed, often with the help some editorial liberties, as "prophecies" that related to Jesus – knowing the "outcome" makes it easy to look for and, if needed, invent statements that "predict" it. The purpose of the large quantity of these "messianic prophecies" and their respective "fulfillments" was to help convince people that they were true.

Although these lists of over 300 "messianic prophecy" and "fulfillment" pairs are invoked with pride and reverence by Christian missionaries as "evidence" of the absolute truth of their beliefs, the first six essays in this series demonstrate that, under scrutiny, they fall apart and invalidate the Christian messianic vision, which claims that it is rooted in the Hebrew Bible.

Given the fact that many, if not most, of the other claimed "messianic prophecy" and "fulfillment" pairs on the *reference list* have already been refuted elsewhere, both in other essays as well as by other individuals, it is safe to conclude the following:

➔ **The entire set of Christian "messianic prophecy" and "fulfillment" pairs is generally devoid of prophetic texts and abounds with irrelevant claims of fulfillment**

➔ **The entire set of Christian "messianic prophecy" and "fulfillment" pairs has been designed ostensibly in order to create the appearance that Christianity is foretold in the Hebrew Scriptures and, thereby, laying the foundation for the claim that the New Testament is the result of a continued divine revelation**

SINLESS JESUS?[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

The laws of sacrifice in the Torah specify that an animal brought as a sacrificial offering had to be free of any blemish or defect. This Biblical requirement was "adopted" by Christian theology and transformed into one of the linchpins of Christianity, the doctrine of a "sinless Jesus", equating the death of Jesus on the cross with a sacrificial offering on the altar in the Temple that was brought for the purpose of atonement. Accordingly, those who accept Jesus as lord and savior are automatically "cleansed" of their sins by his blood.

Christian missionaries use this claim in their efforts to convince Jews that, since the Levitical sacrificial system ended with the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E., Jews have no way to obtain the remission of their sins except through the shed blood of Jesus.

The question "*Was Jesus sinless?*" is addressed in this essay via the analysis of a sample of cases selected from the Gospel of Matthew (there are many others throughout the four Gospels). These accounts, which describe behaviors and actions of Jesus, are contrasted against precepts in the Mosaic Law (Torah), "the Law" in force during the lifetime of Jesus, and for decades after his death, to determine if they represent violations of the Torah. The aim of this analysis is to test the Christian doctrine of a "sinless Jesus" rather than to single Jesus out as a sinner since, in fact, the Hebrew Bible teaches that *all* people sin (1Kings 8:46, Ecclesiastes 7:20).

II. JESUS AND BEING SINLESS

For Christianity, the purpose of the Four Gospels is to testify that Jesus is the Christ (the Christian messiah) and, as such, his sacred mission was to be the sacrificial offering that would make atonement for the sins of mankind. Consequently, each

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:
- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "h"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

Gospel climaxes with a narrative that recounts the historical events surrounding this atoning sacrifice.[2]

According to Christianity, the central core of the Gospels creates the pivotal theme of the salvation brought by Jesus, mediated by the suffering and death of this *sinless messiah*. This concept is perhaps best summarized in the following verse from the New Testament:

> **John 3:16(KJV) - For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**

To the Christian believer, the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross was part of the heavenly Father's plan, from the outset, to redeem mankind. It was only through Jesus, the perfect sacrificial offering of the future, that the stain of sin left on humankind from the act of disobedience by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (the "*Fall of Man*") would be removed, not by a person's own actions.

How did this perfect sacrifice come into existence? The New Testament has Jesus being born from the impregnation by the Holy Spirit (one of the three "persons" of the triune godhead called the Trinity) of a *virgin*, Mary, who remained a virgin throughout the term of her pregnancy. Mary gave birth to a child that was not blemished by the stain of the "*Original Sin*", since he was conceived of God and not through an ordinary act of procreation by two sinful mortals. Moreover, Jesus allegedly remained sinless his entire life, since he is said to have perfectly kept all the commandments and, therefore, fulfilled the entirety of the Torah's precepts:

> **Matthew 5:17-19(KJV) – (17) Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. (18) For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. (19) Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.**

Whether Jesus actually lived up to this declaration is tested in the following analysis.

Going on the premise that the historical Jesus existed, it should not come as a surprise that many statements attributed to him throughout the Four Gospels are consistent with Jewish teachings. After all, it is likely that Jesus, coming from a family of Pharisees and being exposed to this tradition, held to it and practiced Pharisaic (i.e., "Rabbinic") Judaism. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus acknowledges the authority of Sages and "Rabbinic" Judaism of his day:

> **Matthew 23:1-3(KJV) – (1) Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, (2) Saying The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: (3) All therefore whatsoever they**

[2] Significant differences exist among the four accounts of "the Passion". The reader is referred to a complete exposition of this by Rabbi Tovia Singer titled, *Did Jesus Rise From the Dead? What is the Evidence?*, that is available at - http://outreachjudaism.org/resurrection.html

bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. [See also Mark 10:17-19, Lukr 16:16-17, John 14:21.]

Although Jesus viewed them as hypocrites, he nevertheless recognized that the Biblical authority rested in the hands of the Rabbis who, in his day, were the Pharisees. While he may have had some issues with various aspects of "the Law" (Torah), it is understood that Jesus did not advocate doing away with it. On the other hand, accounts in the Four Gospels reveal some conduct and teachings ascribed to Jesus that were at odds with Jewish Law.

III. JESUS AND TORAH

The Written Torah (Mosaic Law) contains 613 precepts [מִצְוֹת (***mitsvot***)], and no person can possibly comply with the entire set.[3,4] This is because various commands pertain to different groups of people. For example, some precepts apply only to males (e.g., circumcision), others only to females (e.g., feminine hygiene); some apply only to Aaronic Priests (e.g., permitted marriages), others to those who own land in Israel (e.g., rotating the crops), etc. Therefore, anyone who claims to have fulfilled the Mosaic Law in its entirety is either ignorant or a liar.

A. Did Jesus act in accordance with Torah?

In the New Testament Paul maintains it is not possible to keep "the Law", and that flawless fulfillment of "the Law" is necessary to please God.

Bearing in mind that, according to Christianity, those who transgress even a single precept of Torah are sinners who cannot, on their own merit, redeem themselves, a number of Torah commands are contrasted against the respective narrative found in the Gospel of Matthew to determine whether the conduct and teachings of Jesus were consistent with what the Torah requires.

1. Marriage and procreation (having children)

✡ The first of the 613 precepts, which appears early in the Book of Genesis, commands mankind to marry and have children:

Genesis 1:28 - And God blessed them [Adam and Eve], and God said to them, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that treads upon the earth."

3 A listing of the 613 precepts is available at – http://www.jewfaq.org/613.htm

4 Many of the 613 precepts in the Written Torah are stated in too vague a language to enable one to follow them, which is the reason that the Oral Torah that was passed down from generation to generation was eventually recorded in the form of the Talmud. Jewish Law (***Halachah***) is a living legal corpus that is based on the 613 precepts as well as on the Oral Torah, which includes the rulings and judgments rendered by the appropriate Jewish authorities.

✞ The New Testament is silent on whether Jesus obeyed this command. The New Testament contains no evidence that Jesus ever married and fathered any children. Christian theology completely rejects this notion.

Conclusion: Jesus did not fulfill the command to marry and procreate.

Sidebar Note: Christian missionaries attempt to neutralize this issue by claiming that celibacy was an optional lifestyle in Biblical days and thereafter. To support this claim, they cite the example of the Prophet Jeremiah as well as some Rabbinic literature. A detailed analysis of the relevant Rabbinic works is beyond the scope of this essay. Though, in summary, it can be said that, when presented in their proper context, they no longer support the claim.

Concerning the Biblical example of Jeremiah, the claim is based on the following passage:

> **Jeremiah 16:1-4 – (1) And the word of the Lord came to me saying: (2) You shall take no wife, and you shall have no sons or daughters in this place. (3) For so said the Lord regarding the sons and the daughters born in this place and regarding their mothers who bear them and their fathers who beget them in this land. (4) Deaths of sicknesses shall they die; they shall neither be lamented nor buried; they shall be as dung on the face of the ground, and with the sword and with famine shall they perish, and their carcasses shall be for food for the fowl of the heaven and for the beasts of the earth.**

There are two ways to view this passage. First, this can be viewed as Jeremiah being commanded by God not to marry at all. In this case, it would not accrue to him as a transgression of the precept in Genesis 1:28. He had no choice other than to obey God's instructions.

Alternatively, the phrase "**in this place**" [in Hebrew, בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה (***ba'maQOM ha'ZEH***)] in verse 2 could be understood to imply that the order is tied to the particular location for a specific reason, which is described elsewhere in the Book of Jeremiah:

> **Jeremiah 11:21-23 – (21) Therefore, so says the Lord of Hosts concerning the men of Anatot, who seek your life, saying, "You shall not prophesy in the name of the Lord, and you shall not die by our hand." (22) Therefore, so says the Lord of Hosts: Behold, I will visit retribution upon them; the young men shall die by the sword; their sons and daughters shall die through hunger. (23) And they shall have no remnant, for I will bring misfortune upon the men of Anatot in the year of their remembrance.**

Jeremiah, being a native and citizen of *Anatot* (Jeremiah 1:1), is commanded not to marry and have children in *Anatot*, since the people who live there will be severely punished for being false prophets. This is not necessarily an absolute prohibition to not marry at all.

2. Honor and respect of parents

✡ According to the Fifth Commandment in the Decalogue, children must honor their parents:

<u>Exodus 20:12</u> - Honor your father and your mother; in order that your days may be prolonged upon the land which the Lord, your God, gives you. [See also Deuteronomy 5:16.]

Noteworthy is the reward for keeping this Commandment – a long life – the only Commandment in the Decalogue with that reward!

✡ The Torah also commands us to revere our parents:

<u>Leviticus 19:3</u> – Every man shall revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths; I am the Lord, your God.

✞ The Gospel of Matthew contains the following account:

<u>Matthew 12:46-50(KJV)</u> – (46) While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. (47) Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. (48) But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? (49) And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! (50) For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother. [See also Luke 2:42-50; John 2:3-4.]

Perhaps because Jesus did not honor his parents, he did not enjoy the reward of a long life on earth as promised in the Fifth Commandment.

✞ This is what Jesus taught concerning the place of one's parents:

<u>Matthew 10:34-37(KJV)</u> – (34) Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. (35) For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. (36) And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. (37) He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. [See also Luke 14:26.]

Such conduct by Jesus is contrary to Torah.

<u>Conclusion</u>: Jesus violated the commands to honor and respect parents!

3. Burying the dead

✡ The Jewish Law of Burial is based on commands in this passage:

<u>Deuteronomy 21:23</u> – His body shall not remain all night upon the gallows, rather you shall surely bury him on that day, for he who is hanged is accursed by God, and you shall not defile your land, which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance.

Burial within 24 hours of death is commanded for an executed criminal. The Sages argued that, if this is to be done for an executed criminal, it certainly is the proper procedure for an innocent person.

✞ The Gospel of Matthew describes the way Jesus tested one of his disciples:

<u>Matthew 8:21-22(KJV)</u> – (21) And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. (22) But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead. [See also Luke 9:59-60.]

Rather than allowing the disciple to properly bury his own father, Jesus demanded that the disciple follow him. Not only does this behavior violate the precept concerning the proper burial of the dead, it also violates the commandment to honor and respect one's parents.

<u>Conclusion</u>: Jesus violated the Jewish Law of Burial.

4. Observance of Passover

According to Christian tradition, and supported by the accounts recorded in the *Synoptic Gospels* (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), the *Last Supper* was the traditional festive Passover eve ritual, the *Seder*. When the Gospel accounts of the Last Supper are contrasted against the Torah laws that deal with the celebration of **Passover** [פֶּסַח (***PESa<u>h</u>***)], it becomes evident that Jesus and his disciples violated them.

✡ Jews are obligated to remove all **leavened product** [חָמֵץ (***<u>h</u>aMETS***)] from their possession prior to the Passover:

<u>Exodus 12:15</u> - Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, but on the first day you shall clear away leaven from your houses; for whoever eats leavened bread, from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.

✡ **Unleavened bread** [מַצּוֹת (***maTSOT***)] must be eaten for the duration of Passover:

<u>Exodus 12:18</u> – In the first [month], on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening, you shall eat unleavened bread; until the twenty-first day of the month in the evening.

✡ Jews are prohibited from having חָמֵץ in their possession throughout Passover:

Exodus 12:19 – For seven days leaven shall not be found in your houses; for whoever eats leaven, that soul shall be cut off from the community of Israel, among the stranger and among the native born of the land.

✡ Jews may not eat food that contains חָמֵץ during Passover:

Exodus 12:20 - You shall eat nothing that has leaven; in all places in which you dwell you shall eat unleavened bread.

✡ Jews may not eat חָמֵץ during Passover:

Exodus 13:3 - And Moses said to the people, "Remember this day on which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, for with the might of the hand did the Lord bring you out from this place; and [therefore] no leavened bread shall be eaten."

✞ The account recorded in the Gospel of Matthew indicates that, at the *Last Supper*, Jesus and his disciples were eating ordinary bread, thereby violating the precepts listed above:

Matthew 26:26(KJV) - And as they were eating, Jesus took bread [αρτος (*artos*)], and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. [See also Mark 14:22; Luke 24:30.]

Note the use of **αρτος** (***artos***) in the Greek source, which is the Greek word for **ordinary leavened bread (or cake)**. Missionaries often argue that the authors of the New Testament, in writing their accounts, implied that Jesus and his disciples ate unleavened bread. Yet, the Greek word used in the Greek source for **unleavened bread** is **αζυμως** (***azumos***; see, e.g., Matthew 26:17; Mark 14:1,12; Luke 22:1,7).

✡ In addition to the precepts concerning the eating of מַצּוֹת, there is also the precept concerning the consumption of the meat of the Paschal lamb:

Exodus 12:8 - And they shall eat the meat in that night, roasted over fire, and [with] unleavened bread; with bitter herbs they shall eat it.

✞ The accounts of the Last Supper, as recorded in the Four Gospels are silent about eating the flesh of the Paschal lamb and the bitter herbs by Jesus and his disciples at any time during the meal.

Missionaries argue that Jesus himself served as the Paschal lamb. This, however, conflicts with the requirements in the Torah.[5]

✡ The following instructions are spelled out regarding what had to be done with the meat of the Paschal lamb:

Exodus 12:9-10 – (9) You shall not eat from it raw, nor boiled in water; but roasted over fire, its head with its legs, and with its inner parts. (10) And you shall not leave any of it until morning; and that which left over until the morning you shall burn in the fire.

✞ Jesus is called the *Paschal Lamb* in the New Testament. However, there is no record this process was applied to him following his death.

Conclusion: Jesus violated the commands that relate to Passover!

5. Love of people and brotherhood

a. Attitude toward Gentiles

✡ The Torah requires Jews to not wrong a Gentile in speech, and love the Gentile:

Exodus 22:20 - You shall not mistreat a stranger, nor shall you oppress him; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 10:19 - And you shall love the stranger; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

✞ The Gospel of Matthew contains the following account:

Matthew 15:22-27(KJV) – (22) And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. (23) But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. (24) But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. (25) Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. (26) But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. (27) And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. [See also Matthew 6:7,32, 18:17.]

This Gentile woman came to Jesus for help, and he called her a dog!

Conclusion: Jesus violated commands concerning the treatment of Gentiles!

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[5] This is discussed in the essay *A Knock-Out Punch: The "Last and Final Sacrifice" Takes the "Ten-Count"* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/JCSacrifice.pdf. Specifically, Counts 4 and 5 address the "Paschal Lamb", though the remaining 8 Counts are all generally relevant.

b. Attitude toward Jews

✡ Several precept in the Torah deal with behavior toward fellow Jews:

Leviticus 19:17-18 – (17) You shall not hate your brother in your heart; you shall surely reprove your friend, and you shall not bear sin on his account. (18) You shall not take revenge on, nor bear any grudge against the people of your nation, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord.

This teaches to not cherish hatred in one's heart, to not put another Jew to shame, to rebuke the sinner, to love all other Jews, to not take revenge, and to not carry a grudge.

✞ Curiously, when asked by someone what the greatest commandment was, Jesus replied:

Matthew 22:37-40(KJV) – (37) Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. (38) This is the first and great commandment. (39) And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (40) On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

In other words, he essentially echoes Deuteronomy 6:5 and a portion of Leviticus 19:18. But, did he "walk the talk"?

Matthew 6:2,5(KJV) – (2) Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. (5) And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

Matthew 23:13-33(KJV) – (13) But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!… (16) Woe unto you, ye blind guides, … (17) Ye fools and blind: … (33) Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, …

The various highlighted descriptions do not sound like words of a Jew who may not necessarily agree with a particular ideology, yet tries to adhere to the precepts in Leviticus 19:17-18. This vicious, violent language sounds more like it is coming from the lips of a virulent anti-Semite, and its likes are found throughout the Four Gospels.

Missionaries typically counter by pointing out that the prophets often resorted to harsh language toward Israel, which is true. However, the difference is that the prophets reproved the people for not obeying the Torah, whereas Jesus cursed at the Jews for not following him.

Conclusion: Jesus violated commands concerning the treatment of fellow Jews!

B. Did Jesus change (add to, or take away from) Torah?

The Torah contains explicit prohibitions on adding to or taking away from it:

> **<u>Deuteronomy 13:1</u> – All that I command you, take care to do it; you shall not add to it, and you shall not diminish from it.** [See also Deuteronomy 4:2.]

Did Jesus obey this command? Here is what he declared:

> **<u>Matthew 5:17-19(KJV)</u> – (17) Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. (18) For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. (19) Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.**

Jesus taught that Torah laws must be preserved. But, did he "walk the talk"?

1. Dietary laws

✡ The Torah specifies which animals may and may not be used for food. Most of the rules on this are found in *Leviticus 11*. This includes both specifications and lists of what is *clean* and *unclean* among land animals, marine animals, birds, and other living creatures – those that may or may not be consumed as food.

✞ The Gospel of Matthew contains the following instructions by Jesus immediately after the scribes and Pharisees question him about his disciples not observing the practice of washing hands before a meal:

> **<u>Matthew 15:10-11(KJV)</u> – (10) And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: (11) Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.** [See also Matthew 15:16-20]

To Christians, this passage shows that, by saying that nothing people consume could defile them, Jesus has voided the dietary laws prescribed in the Torah.[6]

<u>Conclusion</u>: Jesus violated the prohibition on changing Torah Law!

2. Divorce

The existence of the institution of divorce is taken for granted in the Torah:

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[6] It is interesting how this teaching is repeated by Paul in Romans 14:14. Yet, when he speaks to Gentiles, three of the four "laws" given by Paul in Acts 15:29 pertain to that which may not be consumed!

Leviticus 21:7 – They [the Priests] shall not take a wife who is a harlot, or defiled; nor shall they take a woman divorced from her husband; for he is holy to his God.

Numbers 30:10 - But every vow of a widow, and of her who is divorced, with which they have bound their souls, shall stand against her.

✡ When a married couple "falls out of love" with one another, the Torah provides a process that must be followed:

Deuteronomy 24:1-2 – (1) When a man has taken a wife, and married her, and it comes to pass that she finds no favor in his eyes, because he has found some uncleanness in her; then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. (2) And when she has departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife.

✞ According to the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus disapproved of this process:

Matthew 5:31-32KJV) – (31) It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: (32) But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.
[See also Matthew 19:9; Luke 16:18.]

Jesus *changed* the Torah precept by attaching to it the condition that adultery is *the only* permissible grounds for a divorce.

This new rule on divorce also adds to the Torah law on adultery. According to Jesus, unless a spouse commits adultery, if the other spouse divorces and remarries, then both the divorcer and the new spouse become adulterers.

Conclusion: Jesus violated the prohibition on changing Torah Law!

3. The Sabbath

✡ **The Sabbath Day**, יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת (***YOM ha'shaBAT***), is ordained in the Torah as the weekly day of rest on which activities that are considered as work are not permitted:[7]

Exodus 20:8-11 – (8) Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. (9) Six days shall you labor, and do all your work; (10) But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates; (11) For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and made it holy.

[7] The Rabbis specify 39 basic activities in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabbat, Folio 73a. Rabbinic authorities interpret these "primary labors" as they relate to various activities of "modern times" that did not exist in Talmudic times, such as using electricity, electronic devices, forms of transportation, etc.

The importance of שַׁבָּת (***Sha**BAT*) is evident from the fact that the same message is repeated several times throughout the Torah (see, e.g., Exodus 31:13-17, 35:2-3; Leviticus 23:3; Deuteronomy 5:12-14). שַׁבָּת is such an important Holy Day that, while they were in the desert, the Israelites were to collect a double portion of the manna on Friday so as to not have to go out and collect their daily portion on שַׁבָּת:

Exodus 16:22-30 – (22) And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man; and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. (23) And he said to them, This is what the Lord has said, "Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath to the Lord; bake that which you will bake today, and boil what you will boil today; and that which remains over lay up for you to be kept until the morning." (24) And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade; and it did not stink, neither was there any worm in it. (25) And Moses said, "Eat that today; for today is a Sabbath to the Lord; today you shall not find it in the field. (26) Six days you shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none." (27) And it came to pass, that some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, and they found none. (28) And the Lord said to Moses, "How long refuse you to keep my commandments and my laws? (29) See, because the Lord has given you the Sabbath, therefore He gives you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide you every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. (30) So the people rested on the seventh day.

The prescribed penalty for violating שַׁבָּת was death by stoning:

Numbers 15:32-36 – (32) And while the people of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man who gathered sticks upon the Sabbath day. (33) And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation. (34) And they put him in custody, because it was not told what should be done to him. (35) And the Lord said to Moses, "The man shall be surely put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp." (36) And all the congregation brought him outside the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the Lord commanded Moses.

✞ An episode is recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, which describes how Jesus felt about observing שַׁבָּת:

Matthew 12:1-7(KJV) – (1) At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn and to eat. (2) But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day. (3) But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; (4) How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? (5) Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? (6) But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple. (7) But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. [See also Mark 2:23-26.]

Aside from the factual errors in this passage,[8] it appears that, by letting his disciples pick grain on שַׁבָּת, a blatant violation of Torah law, Jesus disagreed with the Torah on the rules that pertain to observing שַׁבָּת.

Instead of heeding the Rabbinic authorities and correcting his disciples' behavior (as he himself taught should be done [Matthew 23:3]), Jesus attempts to justify their actions and challenges the authority of the Rabbis. The flaw in his rationale is that it presupposes the fact that, under ordinary circumstances, there is no justification for picking grain on שַׁבָּת. Hunger can have two extremes – ordinary hunger and starvation. If the disciples were starving, the account is meaningless since Rabbinic law permits life-saving activities on שַׁבָּת. If the disciples were just plain hungry, such as before their next meal, the activity is not permissible, just as the laws concerning adultery may not be violated when one is "hungry" for sex.

Conclusion: Jesus violated the prohibition on changing Torah Law!

C. What about the Oral Torah?

The Torah contains instructions concerning issues of interpretation of the Written Law, and empowers the Supreme Court (***Sanhedrin***) to do this:

Deuteronomy 17:8-13 - (8) If a matter eludes you in judgment, between blood and blood, between judgment and judgment, or between lesion and lesion, [or any other case where there are] words of dispute in your cities, then you shall rise and go up to the place the Lord, your God, chooses. (9) And you shall come to the Levitical Priests and to the judge who will be in those days, and you shall inquire, and they will tell you the words of judgment. (10) And you shall do according to the word they tell you, from the place the Lord will choose, and you shall observe to do according to all they instruct you. (11) According to the law they instruct you and according to the judgment they say to you, you shall do; you shall not divert from the word they tell you, either right or left. (12) And the man who acts intentionally, not obeying the Priest who stands there to serve the Lord, your God, or to the judge, that man shall die, and you shall abolish evil from Israel. (13) And all the people shall listen and fear, and they shall no longer act wantonly.

In other words, the Torah instructs the Jewish people to accept the rulings and interpretations of every appropriate judicial body and not rebel against them.

Among the cases considered in this essay were examples from both the Written and Oral Torah. As was demonstrated, by deviating from that which was required, Jesus violated the commands to obey and not rebel against the rulings of the *Sanhedrin*. Although Christians generally reject the authority of the Rabbis, they seem to forget that the provisions for Rabbinic decisions are present in their own bible, in the Christian "Old Testament".

[8] Ahimelech was the High Priest, not Abiathar; and the priests did not violate the law in giving the showbread to David and his men

III. SUMMARY

Was Jesus without sin during his lifetime? The analysis presented above, based on examples from the Gospel of Matthew alone, demonstrates that Jesus transgressed "the Law". In a broader sense, all four Gospels portray Jesus as someone whom the Sanhedrin could have found guilty of religious impropriety according to Jewish Law. The examples used in the discussion are summarized in Table III-1.

Table III-1 – Summary of Examples of Torah Precepts vs. Teaching of Gospels

Subject	Torah Precept	Gospels' (Jesus') View	WDJD?[9]
Family Life			
• Marriage & procreation	Genesis 1:28	Silent	**Violated**
• Treatment of parents	Exodus 19:3, 20:12, 21:17 [Deuteronomy 5:16]	Matthew 10:34-37, 12:46-50 [Luke 2:42-50, 14:26; John 2:3-4]	**Violated**
• Burying the dead	Deuteronomy 21:23	Matthew 8:22 [Luke 9:59-60]	**Violated**
The Passover			
• Leavened/Unleavened	Exodus 12:15,18,19,20, 13:3	Matthew 26:26 [Mark 14:22; Luke 24:30]	**Violated**
• Paschal lamb	Exodus 12:8-10	Silent	**Violated**
Love and brotherhood		[Declaration: Matthew 22:37-40]	
• Treatment of Gentiles	Exodus 22:20; Deut 10:19	Matthew 15:22-27	**Violated**
• Treatment of Jews	Leviticus 19:17-18	Matthew 6:2,5, 23:13-33	**Violated**
Unchangeable Torah	{Deuteronomy 13:1 [4:2]}	{Declaration: Matthew 5:17-19}	
• Dietary laws	Leviticus 11	Matthew 15:10-11,16-20	**Changed**
• Divorce	Deuteronomy 24:1-2	Matthew 5:31-32, 19:9 [Luke 16:18]	**Changed**
• Sabbath	Exodus 20:8-11, 16:22-30; Numbers 15:32-36	Mt 12:1-7 [Mk 2:23-26]	**Changed**

According to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus was taught by his parents as he was growing up (Luke 2:40-41) and, as a Jew, he was required to observe Jewish Law in accordance with the Torah. Yet, as the present analysis, even in its limited scope, has demonstrated that Jesus did not learn very well what he was taught, nor did he diligently follow that which is commanded in both the Written and Oral Torah. Thus, the conclusion is that Jesus was a sinner just as every other person who has walked on earth.

[9] WDJD? = What Did Jesus Do?

THE RIGHT TO THE THRONE OR TO THE "TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN"[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

Christian missionaries maintain that Jesus has the legal right to sit on the throne of King David as King/Messiah. This claim is based on accounts in the New Testament, on mistranslations and on subsequent misinterpretations of various passages in the Hebrew Bible (the "Old Testament" in Christian Bibles).

In this essay, the validity of this Christian missionary claim is tested by contrasting various arguments being used to support it against what the Hebrew Bible actually teaches concerning the qualifications of the rightful occupants of King David's throne, including מָשִׁיחַ (***mashI'ah***), the promised **Jewish Messiah**.

II. ELIGIBILITY TO THE THRONE OF KING DAVID

The Torah lists job descriptions for various officers of the Hebrew commonwealth, as well as the selection process, qualifications, and duties of a king of Israel:

> **Deuteronomy 17:14-20 – (14) When you come to the land the Lord, your God, is giving you, and you possess it and live therein, and you say, "I will set a king over myself, like all the nations around me," (15) you shall set a king over you, one whom the Lord, your God, chooses; from among your brothers, you shall set a king over yourself; you shall not appoint a foreigner over yourself, one who is not your brother. (16) Only, he may not acquire many horses for himself, so that he will not bring the people back to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, for the Lord said to you, "You shall not return that way any more." (17) And he shall not take many wives for himself, and his heart must not turn away, and he shall not acquire much silver and gold for himself. (18) And it will be, when he sits upon his royal throne, that he shall write for himself a copy of this Torah on a scroll from [that Torah which is] before the Levitical priests. (19) And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to fear the Lord, his God, to keep all the words of this Torah and these statutes, to perform them, (20) so that his heart will not be haughty over his brothers, and so that he will not turn away from the commandment, either to the right or to the left, in order that he may prolong [his] days in his kingdom, he and his sons, among Israel.**

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:

- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "h"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

In essence, the Torah specifies that a legitimate candidate for king of Israel:

- ✡ **Must be a native Israelite (v. 15)**
- ✡ **Must be selected by God [through a true prophet of the generation] (v. 15)**
- ✡ **Must not have a standing cavalry to keep his people in subjection (v. 16)**
- ✡ **Must not establish a harem (v. 17)**
- ✡ **Must own a copy of the Torah, study it himself, and obey its precepts (vs. 18-19)**
- ✡ **Must govern the monarchy according to Torah (v. 20)**

Israel's first constitutional monarchy was established when Saul, the son of Kish, from the Tribe of Benjamin, was anointed as King of Israel by the Prophet Samuel (1Samuel 9:1-10:27). Saul reigned for approximately two years before he was removed from the throne for abrogating his responsibilities by not obeying the command to eradicate Amalek (1Samuel 15). Samuel was instructed to find David, the son of Jesse, from the Tribe of Judah, and anoint him as king of Israel while Saul was still the reigning monarch (1Samuel 16:1-3). Samuel did as he was instructed; he found David and anointed him as king of Israel (1Samuel 16:13). King David first reigned in Hebron for 7-1/2 years, and then moved to Jerusalem, where he sat on the throne for 33 years.

Because David was a righteous king, he received the following promise by God via the Prophet Nathan:

> **2Samuel 7:12-16 – (12) When your days are fulfilled, and you shall lie with your forefathers, then I will raise up your seed that shall issue from your body after you, and I will establish his kingdom. (13) He shall build a house for My Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. (14) I will be to him a father, and he shall be to Me a son; so that when he goes astray I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with afflictions of human beings. (15) And My mercy shall not depart from him; in the manner in which I withdrew it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. (16) And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you; your throne shall be established forever.**

This promise includes the following elements:

- ✡ **An everlasting dynasty, the Davidic dynasty, is established with David**
- ✡ **David's heir to the throne, through whom this dynasty shall pass, will be one of his natural (biological) sons**
- ✡ **The son who inherits the throne from David is the one who will build the Temple in Jerusalem**
- ✡ **The Davidic dynasty will propagate through David's seed (זֶרַע [*zEra*]), i.e., via his direct descendants**
- ✡ **Every future king who sits upon the throne of David will be a mortal man**
- ✡ **Every future king who sits upon the throne of David will have a special "father-son" relationship with God, so that when he sins, he will be duly punished**
- ✡ **Even when future kings (in David's seat) commit iniquity, God will keep the Davidic dynasty intact, and not terminate it as He did with Saul's kingship**

The establishment of this everlasting Davidic dynasty is significant, since מָשִׁיחַ is expected to emerge from it, as was already alluded to in Jacob's blessing of Judah:

> **Genesis 49:10 - The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff, until Shiloh come, and to him shall gather the nations.**

The elements in the promise to David establish a nominal **Requirement** that serves as a "litmus test" for legitimizing candidates who claim a right to the Davidic throne:

Requirement: A claimant to the throne of King David must be a mortal human male, who is a direct (biological) descendant of King David, and whose lineage (a blood-right) must pass through King Solomon.

After King Solomon's reign and the subsequent schism, every king of Judah who sat on the throne of King David satisfied this **Requirement**. Of course, מָשִׁיחַ will also satisfy this **Requirement**, as noted in prophetic statements such as:

> **Jeremiah 23:5 - Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, when I will set up of David a righteous shoot, and he shall reign as king and prosper, and he shall perform judgment and righteousness in the land.**
>
> **Psalms 132:11 - The Lord has sworn to David in truth, from which He will never turn back, "Of the fruit of your body I shall seat upon your throne".**

These passages, among others, unambiguously reflect the stated **Requirement**. This **Requirement** is *a necessary condition* that must be satisfied by any claimant to King David's throne.[2] This means that, even if a claimant meets the **Requirement**, it does not automatically guarantee that he will be king. This is evident from the fact that, while there were normally multiple individuals from the royal seed who were alive in the Kingdom of Judah at any given time, and who qualified under the **Requirement**, only one of them was selected to reign as King of Judah.

III. WHAT DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT SAY?

According to Christian theology, Jesus was the promised Messiah. The New Testament contains several accounts commonly cited in support of this doctrine:

- ✞ **The authors of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke refer to Jesus as the *son of David*:**

  Matthew 1:1(KJV) – The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. [See also Matthew 9:27, 12:23, 15:22, 20:30,31, 21:9,15, 22:42; Mark 10:47,48; Luke 18:38,39]

- ✞ **Paul and the author of the Gospel of John refer to Jesus as the being *of the seed of David*:**

  Romans 1:3(KJV) - Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed

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[2] In the language of mathematics, a conditional statement such as, **X IS A NECESSARY CONDITION FOR Y**, means that without **X** there is no **Y**. However, having **X** does not automatically guarantee **Y**! On the other hand, a conditional statement such as, **X IS A SUFFICIENT CONDITION FOR Y**, means that if there is **X** then there is **Y**. In other words, having **X** automatically guarantees **Y**!

of David according to the flesh; [See also John 7:42; 2 Ti 2:8]

If these statements were accurate, then Jesus would have met the **Requirement** from the Hebrew Bible. However, as is demonstrated in the analysis that follows, these accounts create serious internal issues for Christian theology, which casts doubt on their validity.

IV. Common Christian Rationalizations of the Claim and How They Are Neutralized

Christian missionaries have fashioned many scenarios to rationalize their claim that Jesus has a legitimate right to the throne of King David. *Do these schemes survive under rigorous scrutiny?*

Many of these scenarios utilize the two genealogies recorded in the New Testament. These two genealogies and the genealogy recorded in 1Chronicles 3 are shown in Table IV-1. For brevity and simplicity, only generations that start with King David and go forward are shown, and the names shown in the genealogy from the Hebrew Bible are the anglicized rather than phonetic Hebrew renditions.

<u>Table IV-1</u> – Comparing genealogies: Hebrew Bible vs. New Testament

Hebrew Bible			**New Testament***			
#	**1Chronicles 3:5-24(JPT)**	**Remarks**	**#**	**Matthew 1:6-16 (KJV)**	**#**	**Luke 3:23-31 (KJV)**
1.	**David**		**1.**	**David**	**1.**	**David**
2.	**Solomon**	Also listed as David's sons by Bathsheba are: Nathan, Shimea, Shovav.	2.	**Solomon**	2.	**Nathan**
3.	Rehoboam		3.	Roboam	3.	Mattatha
4.	Abijah		4.	Abiah	4.	Menan
5.	Asa		5.	Asa	5.	Melea
6.	Jehoshaphat		6.	Josaphat	6.	Eliakim
7.	Joram		7.	Joram	7.	Jonan
8.	**Ahaziah**				8.	Joseph
9.	**Joash**				9.	Juda
10.	**Amaziah**				10.	Simeon
11.	Azariah	Also known as Uzziah.	8.	Ozias	11.	Levi
12.	Jotham		9.	Joatham	12.	Matthat
13.	Ahaz		10.	Achaz	13.	Jorim
14.	Hezekiah		11.	Ezekias	14.	Eliezer
15.	Menasseh		12.	Manasses	15.	Jose
16.	Amon		13.	Amon	16.	Er
17.	Josiah		14.	Josias	17.	Elmodam
18.	**Jehoiakim** (changed from **Eliakim** by Pharaoh Necho)	Also listed as Josiah's sons are: Johanan (the firstborn), Mattaniah (also known as Zedekiah, the last king of Judah), and Shallum (also known as Jehoahaz).			18.	Cosam

					19.	Addi
					20.	Melchi
19.	**Jeconiah**	Also listed as a son of Jehoiakim is Zedekiah.	**15.**	**Jechonias**	21.	Neri
20.	**Shealtiel**	Also listed as a son of Jeconiah is Assir.	**16.**	**Salathiel**	**22.**	**Salathiel**
21.	**Pedaiah**	Also listed as Shealtiel's sons are: Malchiram, Shenazar, Jecamiah, Hoshama, and Nedabiah.				
22.	**Zerubbabel**	Also listed as a son of Pedaiah is Shimei.	**17.**	**Zorobabel**	**23.**	**Zorobabel**
23.	Hananiah	Also listed as Zerubbabel's sons are: Meshullam, Ohel, Berechiah, and Hasadiah-Jushab-Hesed.	18.	Abiud	24.	Rhesa
24.	Jeshaiah	Also listed as a son of Hananiah is Pelatiah.	19.	Eliakim	25.	Joanna
25.	Rephaiah		20.	Azor	26.	Juda
26.	Arnan		21.	Sadoc	27.	Joseph
27.	Obadiah		22.	Achim	28.	Semei
28.	Shechaniah		23.	Eliud	29.	Mattathias
29.	Shemaiah		24.	Eleazar	30.	Maath
30.	**Neariah**	Also listed as Shemaiah's sons are: Hattush, Igal, Bariah, and Shaphat.			31.	Nagge
31.	**Elioenai**	Also listed as Neariah's sons are: Hezekiah and Azrikam.			32.	Esli
		Listed sons of Elioenai are: Hodaviahu, Eliashib, Pelaiah, Akkub, Johanan, Dalaiah, and Anani.			33.	Naum
					34.	Amos
					35.	Mattathias
					36.	Joseph
					37.	Janna
					38.	Melchi
					39.	Levi
			25.	Matthan	40.	Matthat
			26.	Jacob	41.	Heli
			27.	**Joseph**	**42.**	**Joseph**
			28.	**Jesus**	**43.**	**Jesus**

* **Bold names** indicate names of special interest. Underlined **bold names** indicate intermediate points of convergence for the two genealogies of the New Testament.

A. Rationalization: The claim is valid according to the genealogy in Matthew

- ✞ **Christian missionaries** point to the genealogy in the Gospel of Matthew, where the lineage of Jesus leads to King David through King Solomon.

- ✡ **Jewish counter-arguments**

1. Concerning the credibility of the Matthew genealogy

The Matthew genealogy, going forward from David to Zorobabel, does not match the corresponding genealogy recorded in 1Chronicles 3 of the Hebrew Bible. It appears that, in order to create a genealogy that would suit his purpose, the author of the Gospel of Matthew had to –

- ✞ **Leave out the generations that correspond to Kings Ahazia, Joash, Amaziah, and Eliakim/Jehoiakim.**
- ✞ **Leave out the generation that corresponds to Pedaiah, the son of Shealtiel.**
- ✞ **Create new names for the generations going forward from Zerubbabel, none of which match the names that appear for the corresponding generations in the genealogy of 1Chronicles 3.**
- ✞ **Leave out the generations that correspond to Neariah, the son of Shemaiah, and Elioenai, the son of Neariah.**

Given the choice of sources for this genealogy – the Gospel of Matthew in the New Testament or 1Chronicles in the Hebrew Bible – *which source would you accept as the one to trust for its accuracy?*

- ✞ **A common rebuttal by Christian missionaries** is that the author of the Gospel of Matthew used sources no longer available today, since these records were lost when the Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in the year 70 C.E.

- ✡ **The Jewish response to this rebuttal** is that, apart from the fact that Jewish genealogical records were not kept in the Temple, the Hebrew Bible is the "proof text" here.[3] The genealogies recorded in 1Chronicles were compiled during the fifth century B.C.E. by Ezra and Nehemiah. Both leaders undoubtedly had access to accurate data on the generations.

2. Concerning specific "show stoppers" within the Matthew genealogy

Show stopper: The Curse on Jeconiah – The Matthew genealogy shows the lineage of Jesus going through King Jeconiah. King **Jehoiachin** of Judah [יְהוֹיָכִין (***y***^{e}***hoyaCHIN***), who is also known by the

[3] A detailed discussion of this subject appears in Section IV.B of the essay *Genealogical Scams and Flimflams* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Genealogies.pdf

names, **Jeconiah**, יְכָנְיָה (***y***e***chan'YAH***) and **Coniah**, כָּנְיָהוּ (***con'YAhu***)], one of the kings of Judah about whom is written that "**he did that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord**" (2Chronicles 36:9). Chapter 22 in the Book of Jeremiah enumerates a series of judgments upon several of these kings of Judah, the last passage of which is a proclamation concerning Coniah, commonly known as the *Curse on Jeconiah* (Jeremiah 22:24-30). The last verse in this passage appears to signal the termination of the royal branch that led from King David to Jeconiah:

> **Jeremiah 22:30 – Thus says the Lord: "Inscribe this man [Coniah] childless, a man who will not prosper in his days; for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah."**

In other words, even though Jeconiah had fathered children prior to this curse, he is considered *as if* he were childless, since none of his descendants would be eligible to sit on the throne of King David. The entire royal branch that emerged from Jeconiah, including Jeconiah himself, was a cursed branch. Thus, even if the Matthew genealogy were accepted as valid, neither Joseph nor any of his sons were eligible candidates for the throne of King David, since the lineage of Joseph, the "father" of Jesus, passes through Jeconiah.

✞ **A common Christian missionary rebuttal** is that, according to the Talmud, (a) Jeconiah repented and was forgiven, and (b) notwithstanding (a), exile atones for sin, and therefore the curse was lifted.

✡ **The Jewish response to this rebuttal** is that, if this were the case, then it proves that, contrary to Christian doctrine, the shedding of blood is not required for the remission of sins. This would mean that the death of Jesus on the cross did not serve any purpose.

Why do Christian missionaries quote the Talmud when they reject it as an authoritative source? Missionaries often cite passages from the Talmud when these appear to support their theology. Yet, it is a fact that, not only are those passages taken out of their true context and misused, the Sages of the Talmud never supported Christian theology – they rejected it outright. The missionaries cannot have it both ways!

Show stopper: Joseph is Jesus' biological father – In the Matthew genealogy, Joseph is listed as the father of Jesus. All genealogies listed in the Hebrew Bible show the natural father-to-son(s) progressions of the generations, i.e., from the father to his biological son(s). Applying this criterion to the Matthew genealogy, and temporarily setting aside the issue of the *Curse on Jeconiah*, it would mean that Joseph was the biological father of Jesus, and this would contradict Christian doctrine according to which Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit by his "virgin" mother Mary.

✞ **A common Christian missionary rebuttal** is that Joseph, husband of Mary, was not the biological father of Jesus. Rather, Joseph was the *adoptive* father of the divine Jesus, whose real father was the Holy Spirit. Therefore, by virtue of his being adopted by Joseph, supposedly a descendant of King David, Jesus inherited a legitimate claim to David's throne.

✡ **The Jewish response to this rebuttal** is that the argument given is defeated on at least the following two counts. First, although adoption is allowed in Judaism, the only rights of inheritance that accrue to an adopted child are those pertaining to tangible assets, such as property. On the other hand, blood-rights, such as tribal pedigree and Levitical priesthood, can only be transmitted from a father to his biological sons, inclusive of any special blessings and, yes, curses. Were adoption into the royal line possible, Athaliah would not have had to take such drastic measures following the death of her sons at the hands of Jehu and his men (see 2Kings 9:27, 10:13-14):

> **<u>2Kings 11:1</u> – And Athaliah, Ahaziah's mother, saw that her son was dead, and she rose and destroyed all those of royal descent.**

Had adoption been a viable solution to the problem of an heir, Athaliah would have been able to pursue that route to select the next person to sit on the throne of David.

Second, if Jesus were able to inherit royal lineage by adoption, the *Curse of Jeconiah*, which had become part of the characteristics of that particular royal branch, would have come along with this blood-right.

✞ **Another common Christian missionary rebuttal** to this problem of adoption is that Jesus got his royal lineage through his mother Mary, whose genealogy, which, as some missionaries claim, appears in the Gospel of Luke and leads to King David.

✡ **The Jewish response to this rebuttal** is found below, in the discussion of Luke's genealogy.

B. <u>Rationalization</u>: The claim is valid according to the genealogy in Luke

✞ **Christian missionaries** point to the genealogy listed for Jesus in the third chapter in the Gospel of Luke as validating his claim to the throne of King David.

✡ **Jewish counter-arguments**

1. Concerning the credibility of the Luke genealogy

The Luke genealogy, going forward from David to Zorobabel, does not match the corresponding genealogy recorded in 1Chronicles 3 of the Hebrew Bible. It appears that, in order to create a genealogy that would suit his purpose, the author of the Gospel of Luke had to –

- ✞ **Come up with a set of new names except for Shealtiel and Zerubbabel.**
- ✞ **Decrease the average generational span to ~25 years relative to the average generational span of ~38 years in the Matthew genealogy, a reduction of ~13 years or ~34%, which is significant.**

Given the choice of sources for this genealogy – the Gospel of Luke in the New Testament or 1Chronicles in the Hebrew Bible – *which source would you accept as the one to trust for its accuracy?*

Show stopper: Inconsistent genealogies – Christians agree that the Matthew genealogy is that of Jesus through Joseph. However, Christians do not agree on whose genealogy is listed in the Gospel of Luke. Some say it is Mary's genealogy, even though her name does not appear in it, while others say that it is the genealogy of Jesus *by Law*, and the Matthew genealogy is his lineage *by Nature*. This issue is explained in more detail in the next section. Suffice it to say here that, since Christians cannot agree on whose genealogy is listed in the Gospel of Luke, its validity and usefulness in promoting the claim are in doubt.

- ✞ **A common Christian missionary rebuttal** is that the author of the Gospel of Luke used sources no longer available today, since these records were lost when the Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in the year 70 C.E.

- ✡ **The Jewish response to this rebuttal** is the same as given in response to the same claim regarding the sources of the Matthew genealogy.

2. Concerning specific "show stoppers" within the Luke genealogy

Show stopper: Whose genealogy is this? – As stated above, some Christians attribute the Luke genealogy to Mary's lineage, even though she is not named in it, while others say that it is the genealogy of Jesus *by Law*, and the Matthew genealogy is his lineage *by Nature*.

- ✞ **One common Christian missionary claim** is that the Luke genealogy is that of Mary and, since it leads to King David, it accords Jesus the required lineage and validates his claim to the Davidic throne.

- ✡ **The Jewish response to this claim** is that it suffers from two serious and insurmountable problems. First, the **Requirement** states that the

line to King David must pass through King Solomon. Yet, according to the Luke genealogy, the line leads to King David through Nathan, King Solomon's brother. This violates the **Requirement**.

Second, and more important, is the fact that the claim violates Torah, which is part of the Hebrew Bible, the Scripture in force at the time Jesus was born. According to Torah, pedigree is determined exclusively by the biological (natural) father. Female genealogies are irrelevant to bloodline and, in general, are not listed in the Hebrew Bible. This is evident from every census that was taken among the Israelites. In every census males were counted, each "**according to the house of his father**" (e.g., Numbers 1:18).

- ✞ **Another common Christian missionary claim** is that the Luke genealogy is the lineage of Jesus *by Law*, while the one in Matthew is his genealogy *by Nature* and, therefore, they are in harmony, which validates his claim to the throne of King David.

- ✡ **The Jewish response to this claim** is that it, too, suffers from serious and insurmountable problems. First, as was previously noted, if the natural father of Jesus was the Holy Spirit, then Jesus cannot be the natural son of Joseph; and, since tribal lineage is a blood-right, the claim to King David's throne cannot be passed from Joseph to Jesus by adoption.

  Second, the Holy Spirit cannot pass down to Jesus the required tribal lineage since the Holy Spirit has no tribal affiliation, nor is the Holy Spirit a natural descendant of King David. In other words, since the Holy Spirit itself does not fulfill the **Requirement**, neither can its "begotten son" fulfill it.

  The alternative of Joseph having been Jesus' natural father is also not an attractive option for Christian missionaries. If Joseph were the natural father of Jesus, then, not only would this make Jesus fully mortal, but the *Curse of Jeconiah* would have passed from Joseph to him along with the tribal lineage and any other blood-rights.

Show stopper: Levirate Marriage(s) is (are) not the answer – In the Hebrew Bible, genealogies are always listed according to the natural father-to-son(s) generational progression, of which 1Chronicles 3 is a good example. Except for King David, Shealtiel, and Zerubbabel, the Luke genealogy does not have any names in common with the genealogy in 1Chronicles 3 and, starting with King David as a common point, not even the remaining two shared names have corresponding generation numbers.

Even more astounding is the fact that the two genealogies recorded in the New Testament share only two additional names in all the generations from King David to Jesus, namely, Joseph and Jesus. Moreover, the generation numbers, once again, do not line up for the two genealogies in the New Testament.

- ✞ **A common Christian missionary argument** commonly offered as an explanation for this rather complicated, perhaps even impossible, scheme in which the two New Testament genealogies converge at Zorobabel, Salathiel, Joseph, and Jesus, uses the notion of a *Levirate Marriage* taking place at various points along the way.

- ✡ **The Jewish response to this rebuttal** is based on the Biblical definition of a valid *Levirate Marriage*, which requires the brothers to be *paternal brothers*, i.e., they must have a common father.[4] An examination of the generations in the Luke genealogy reveals that the last such possible marital union, the one that resulted in the birth of Joseph, was not a valid *Levirate Marriage*. If Jacob married Heli's childless widow, then it follows that, since Heli and Jacob did not share the same biological father (see Luke genealogy), Joseph was an illegitimate child, the product of a prohibited union between a man and a woman (Leviticus 18:16). This disqualifies Joseph from being a legitimate heir of any blood-rights that would have otherwise accrued to him. Consequently, this problem would also apply to Jesus.

- ✞ **Another Christian missionary argument** is a "variation on the theme" of the *Levirate Marriage* idea. Here, a *Levirate Marriage* that takes place in the last phase of the Luke genealogy, of which Joseph was the product, is combined with the claim that the Zorobabel and Salathiel listed in the Matthew genealogy were different persons from the Zorobabel and Salathiel of the Luke genealogy.

- ✡ **The Jewish response to this argument** is twofold. First, the notion of a *Levirate Marriage* of which the product was Joseph has already been demonstrated to be false. Second, considering the rarity of the names Zerubbabel and Shealtiel in the Hebrew Bible, names which

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[4] The *Law of Levirate Marriage* is stated in Deuteronomy 25:5-10. This Law states that, when a married man dies and leaves no heirs to carry on his name, and if the deceased has an unmarried brother, then this brother must marry the widow and (attempt to) have children. In the absence of an eligible brother, a close male relative on the father's side may qualify (as was the case of Boaz, a kinsman of Elimelech, who married Ruth [see Book of Ruth]). The first-born son of such a marriage is regarded as if he was the son of the deceased brother, and is named accordingly. It is important to note that, in the case of the two brothers, they <u>must</u> have at least <u>a common father</u>, i.e., they must be <u>paternal brothers</u>. The *Law of Levirate Marriage* does not apply to uterine brothers, i.e., brothers who share only a mother; children born of such a union are considered illegitimate. The *Law of Levirate Marriage* also contains provisions for the case when the surviving eligible brother refuses to fulfill his obligation. [Note: The term "***levir***" is a Latin word that means **a husband's brother**, thus it is not used in the Hebrew Bible.]

belong to only a single pair of individuals, it is rather unlikely that they represent persons in the Luke genealogy who are different from those bearing the same names in both the Matthew and 1Chronicles 3 genealogies.

C. The "icing on the cake": Paul's views on genealogies and their study

Paul's position on genealogies, as expressed in the New Testament, is both interesting and curious. Perhaps recognizing the severity of the problems that plagued the pedigree of Jesus, Paul wrote:

> **1Timothy 1:4(KJV) - Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.**
>
> **Titus 3:9(KJV) - But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.**

Paul teaches Christians that certain parts of the Bible – the genealogies, which include those of Jesus – are to be avoided, since they raise questions and have no value.[5] Yet, in spite of these admonitions, Christian missionaries persist with their genealogical mind games.

V. SUMMARY

In this essay it was demonstrated that the claims of Christian missionaries contradict what the Hebrew Bible teaches, and they are even at odds with the New Testament.

Does Jesus have a valid claim to King David's throne? The answer to the question depends on whether one accepts that which the Hebrew Bible requires of a claimant to fulfill the **Requirement** developed in Section II.

According to the Hebrew Bible, the Scripture in force at the time, Jesus did not have a valid claim to the throne of King David. Yet, in spite of the facts demonstrated in the analysis above, there are those who choose to ignore the **Requirement** derived from the Hebrew Bible, as well as the problems with the two genealogies recorded in the New Testament. They prefer to accept anything that appears to legitimize Jesus as a claimant to the throne of King David and, thereby, rejects what the Hebrew Bible teaches.

[5] By contrast, there is not a single Jewish Sage who ever taught that parts of the Hebrew Bible are not to be heeded and should be avoided and/or ignored.

<u>MESSIAH WANTED!</u>[1]



I. INTRODUCTION

Christianity is based on the claim that Jesus is the Messiah who fulfilled all the prophecies in the Hebrew Bible. In fact, many Christian missionary websites list hundreds of "Old Testament" prophecies, along with passages from the New Testament as "evidence" of their fulfillment by Jesus.[2] The reality is that the messianic agenda, as described in the Hebrew Bible, consists of a mere handful of significant items, which are to be completed during the reign of מָשִׁיחַ (***masHI'a<u>h</u>***), the promised **Jewish Messiah**.

Although it is not the spiritual concern of Judaism and of the Jewish community at large whether Christians choose to believe these claims to be true, unfortunate situations occur when Christian missionaries use this material for the purpose of Jewish evangelism. They try to convince their Jewish targets, particularly those who are perceived as lacking a good Jewish education, that this is all true and that they need to accept Jesus as Messiah in order to become "completed Jews".

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:

- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "<u>h</u>"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

[2] One such example is, *Jesus is the Messiah: The Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled By Jesus Christ Ordered by Category* - http://contenderministries.org/prophecy/jesusmessiah2.php

This essay focuses on what the Hebrew Bible teaches concerning the qualifications and expectations of the מָשִׁיחַ. This information is presented in the form of a typical "Job Requisition" that serves as a template for evaluating the suitability of a claimant to this position. Specifically, this template is applied to Jesus, Christianity's candidate for this position, and demonstrates, (a) that he failed to qualify for the job, and (b) even though it is claimed he was appointed to the position, he did not do the job right.

II. JOB REQUISITION: מָשִׁיחַ, JUDAISM'S MESSIAH

The "Job Requisition" template for the position of Jewish Messiah in Table II-1 describes who, according to the Hebrew Bible, this person will be, what his known attributes are, and what he is expected to accomplish. Further elaboration on its contents follows the table.

Table II-1 – "Job Requisition" for the promised מָשִׁיחַ

Category	Requirements
Position Available	מָשִׁיחַ - the Jewish Messiah.
Job Description	To usher in the messianic era, as foretold in the Hebrew Bible, and to preside over the people of Israel as their king, sitting on the throne of King David.
Job Requirements	To execute and successfully complete the messianic agenda, as described in the Hebrew Bible, within one lifetime.
Prior Job Experience	None.
Qualifications	The successful candidate will possess attributes that must include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following: **1.** Be the seed (a direct descendant) of King David, through King Solomon (e.g., 2Samuel 7:12-16) **2.** Be a spiritual and political/military leader (e.g., Isaiah 2:3, 11:2-3,6; Daniel 7:14) **3.** Be married and have children during his term (e.g., Ezekiel 46:16-17)
Performance Appraisal Criteria	The successful candidate will be expected to complete the messianic agenda and, thereby, bring about certain conditions during his reign, though some actions will commence prior to his being identified as the Messiah. These must include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following: **1.** The coming of Elijah to herald the Messiah's arrival (e.g., Malachi 3:1,23-24[4:5-6][3]) **2.** Building the Third Temple in Jerusalem (e.g., Ezekiel 37:26-28) **3.** In-gathering of the Jewish exiles to the Promised Land (e.g., Isaiah 11:12) **4.** Reunifying Judah and Israel into one people (e.g., Ezekiel 37:22,24) **5.** Establishing world peace (e.g., Isaiah 2:4) **6.** Bringing about the universal knowledge of God (e.g., Isaiah 11:9) **7.** Realizing the general resurrection of the dead (e.g., Daniel 12:2)

[3] Chapter/Verse numbers shown in square brackets, e.g., [4:5-6], are those used in Christian Bibles.

A. Prior Job Experience

Although Jewish tradition holds that in every generation there lives a person who is worthy of being the promised Jewish Messiah, this job has never before been filled. Consequently, it is not possible to possess any prior job experience.

B. Qualifications

The Qualifications of candidates for the job of Jewish Messiah are the pre-requisites for consideration, and they are specified in the Hebrew Bible.

1. Seed of David through Solomon

The Messiah will be a biological descendant of King David from the branch that goes through Solomon, since Solomon is the one who built the Temple (highlighting added for emphasis throughout this document unless otherwise noted):

> **2Samuel 7:12-16 – (12) When your days will be completed and you will lie with your forefathers, then I shall raise up your seed after you, that which will issue from your loins, and I shall establish his kingdom. (13) He shall build a Temple for My sake, and I shall make firm the throne of his kingdom forever. (14) I shall be to him a Father, and he shall be to Me a son; so that when he goes astray I will chastise him with the rod of men and with afflictions of human beings. (15) But My mercy shall not move away from him as I removed [it] from Saul, whom I removed from before you. (16) And your dynasty and your kingdom shall be confirmed before you forever; your throne will remain firm forever.** [See also Isaiah 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5, 30:9, 33:15; Ezekiel 34:23-24, 37:24-25.]
>
> **1Chronicles 22:9-10 – (9) Behold a son will be born to you; he will be a man of peace, and I shall give him peace from all his enemies around about, for Solomon will be his name, and I shall give peace and quiet to Israel in his days. (10) He shall build a House in My Name, and he shall be to Me as a son, and I to him as a Father, and I shall prepare the throne of his kingdom forever.** [See also 1Kings 8:15-20; 1Chronicles 17:11-15, 28:3-7.]

2. Spiritual and Political/Military Leader of Israel

The Messiah will be steeped in Torah, an authority who will influence all of Israel to follow Torah in an environment created by his spiritual leadership:

> **Isaiah 2:3 - And many nations shall go, and they shall say, "Come, let us go up to the Lord's mount, to the House of the God of Jacob, and let Him teach us of His ways, and we will go in His paths;" for out of Zion shall the Torah come forth, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem.**
>
> **Isaiah 11:2 - And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and heroism, a spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord.**

The Messiah will defeat and conquer the enemies surrounding Israel. As an ordinary mortal, a "flesh & blood" human being, he lives/will live in a world of

recognizable realities of military requirements and political alignments. He will have to deal with these realities, and emerge victorious within the constraints that they engender. Nevertheless, his political leadership will be well recognized throughout the world, and his political influence will manifest itself in a universal peace, as is suggested by Isaiah in this metaphorical allusion:

> **Isaiah 11:6 - And a wolf shall live with a lamb, and a leopard shall lie with a kid; and a calf and a lion cub and a fatling [shall lie] together, and a small child shall lead them.**
>
> **Daniel 7:14 - He has been given dominion, honor, and kingship, so that all peoples, nations, and tongues will serve him; his dominion is an eternal dominion that will never be removed, and his kingship will not be destroyed.**

3. Married with Children

Although marriage and children are not stated pre-requisites for being the Messiah, there is a clear indication that **the Prince**, who is the Messiah/King [see Ezekiel 34:23-24, 37:24][4], will have children (via marriage) at some point in time during his reign, and they will be entitled to inherit his property:

> **Ezekiel 46:16-17 – (16) Thus says the Lord God: "If the Prince gives a gift to any of his sons, it is his inheritance to remain in their possession; it is their property by inheritance. (17) But if he gives a gift of his inheritance to one of his servants, then it shall be his [the servant's] until the year of liberty, and then it returns to the Prince; only to his sons shall his inheritance belong.**

C. Performance Appraisal Criteria

The Performance Appraisal Criteria comprise several significant messianic agenda items against which the performance of a qualified candidate for the job of Jewish Messiah must be evaluated.

1. The Coming of Elijah to Herald the Messiah's Arrival

Elijah the prophet will precede the Messiah and "pave the way" for his arrival, heralding the commencement of the messianic era:

> **Malachi 3:23[4:5] – Behold, I will send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.**

2. Building the Third Temple in Jerusalem

The Third Temple will be built by the Messiah; perhaps he may not literally do the brick and mortar work, but it will be done when he begins his reign on the throne of David. The presence of the Third Temple is envisioned in what is,

[4] See *Ezekiel 40-48 - "The Prince" of Ezekiel: Who Is He?* – http://thejewishhome.org/counter/EzekielPrince.pdf.

perhaps, one of the most detailed and vivid descriptions of the messianic era to be found in the Hebrew Bible - Chapter 37 in the Book of Ezekiel:

> **Ezekiel 37:26-28 – (26) And I will form a covenant of peace for them, an everlasting covenant shall be with them; and I will establish them, and I will multiply them, and I will place My Sanctuary in their midst forever. (27) And My dwelling place shall be over them; and I will be to them for a God, and they shall be to Me as a people. (28) And the nations shall know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when My Sanctuary is in their midst forever.** [See also Isaiah 33:20; Ezekiel Chapters 40-48.]

Later on, in Chapters 40-48, Ezekiel provides detailed descriptions of the Third Temple and the ritual services to be held within its walls.

3. In-Gathering of the Jewish Exiles to the Promised Land

The Messiah will repatriate the Jewish people from the Diaspora to the promised land of Israel in preparation for the repair of the schism that followed Solomon's reign:

> **Isaiah 11:12 - And he [Messiah] shall set up a banner for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.** [See also Isaiah 43:5-6; Jeremiah 16:15, 23:3; Ezekiel 37:21-22; Zechariah 10:6-10.]

4. Reunifying Judah and Israel into One People

The messianic agenda calls for the restoration of a unified kingdom for the people of Israel:

> **Ezekiel 37:22 - And I will make them into one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be to them all as a king; and they shall no longer be as two nations, and they shall not be divided into two kingdoms anymore.** [See also the "lead-in" to the above verse - Ezekiel 37:16-21; Isaiah 11:13.]

The Messiah will accomplish this and reign over a reunified Kingdom of Israel:

> **Ezekiel 37:24 – And My servant David shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd; and they shall follow My ordinances, and observe My statutes, and do them.**

5. Establishing World Peace

The Messiah will be recognized as a fair judge and peacemaker, and in the messianic era, disputes between countries will be settled through peaceful means and not by war:

> **Isaiah 2:4 - And he [the Messiah] shall judge among the nations, and he shall reprove many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, and they shall not learn war anymore.** [See also Isaiah 11:6-8; Micah 4:3-4.]

6. Bringing about the Universal Knowledge of God

A universal knowledge of God will prevail, and this will put an end to destruction and violence:

> **Isaiah 11:9 - They shall not harm and not destroy on all of My holy mountain; for the land shall be as filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea bed.** [See also Jeremiah 31:33[34]; Zechariah 14:9.]

7. Realizing the Resurrection of the Dead

This is foretold in Ezekiel's vision of the "dry bones":

> **Ezekiel 37:12-13 – (12) Therefore, prophesy and say to them, So says the Lord God: Lo! I open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves as My people, and bring you home to the land of Israel. (13) Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and lead you up out of your graves as My people.** [See also Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2.]

Though, according to Daniel's vision (12:2), most of the dead, but not all, will come back to life. The righteous will live in bliss, and the wicked will live in misery.

III. Christianity's Candidate – Appraisal of Qualifications & Performance

According to the New Testament, the Messiah of Christianity is Jesus. Rather than accept (on faith) the claims made by Christian missionaries about Jesus being the (Jewish) Messiah promised in the Hebrew Bible, he will be considered here as an applicant for the position of Jewish Messiah, whose credentials and performance will be evaluated using the requirements listed in the "Job Requisition".

A. Prior Job Experience

According to the explanation given in Section II.A, Jesus, as Christianity's candidate for the job, satisfied this criterion.

B. Qualifications – Did Jesus Qualify for the Job?

1. Seed of David through Solomon

Although the New Testament authors claim that Jesus was the "son of David" (e.g., Matthew 1:1; Mark 12:35), the manner of his allegedly miraculous "Virgin Birth" (e.g., Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:27-35) rules out the possibility of a Davidic lineage for him. According to Jewish Law (e.g., Numbers 1:18), and as confirmed by recent genetic research, tribal lineage - a blood right - is passed exclusively from a father to his biological male progeny (via the Y-

Chromosome). Consequently, it cannot be transmitted in any other manner, including adoption. Since, according to the New Testament, the Holy Ghost, not Joseph, impregnated the "Virgin Mary", Jesus has no identifiable tribal lineage and, therefore, he did not have the required blood line to King David.

Another problem with the claim by Jesus to the Davidic throne is the matter of the two hopelessly irreconcilable genealogies in the New Testament (Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38).[5] Christians still cannot agree on whether the genealogy in the Gospel of Luke belongs to Joseph or to Mary. Either way, this is a moot point, since that genealogy goes through Solomon's brother Nathan and, too, a female's genealogy is irrelevant to lineage according to the Hebrew Bible. Perhaps this is the reason that Paul, recognizing the problems with these two genealogies, wrote:

> **1 Timothy 1:4(KJV) - Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.**
>
> **Titus 3:9(KJV) - But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.**

Note here how Paul, to whom Christian missionaries refer as "Rabbi", teaches Christians that some parts of the Bible – genealogies in this case, including those of Jesus – are akin to fables and foolish questions, which must not be given heed and should be avoided.

Missionaries will often point to an account in the Hebrew Bible, specifically, to the episode of the Daughters of ***Ts'lofHAD*** (צְלָפְחָד) in Numbers 27:1-11, as an example where daughters can inherit tribal rights when a father leaves no male sons. The flaw with this claim is that the episode does not deal with tribal lineage; rather it deals with the laws regarding the rights of children to inherit their father's physical property, such as land. This is reiterated in Numbers 36 where the laws regarding heiresses are described.

2. Spiritual and Political/Military Leader of Israel

When did Jesus serve as spiritual and military/political leader of a unified people of Israel? Though Jesus is referred to as "King of the Jews" in each of the Four Gospels (Matthew 27:29; Mark 15:9; Luke 23:38; John 18:39), there exists neither historical record nor any other validated credible evidence (including the New Testament itself) to substantiate that Jesus ever served in such a capacity. Moreover, there exists no extant factual evidence that he was ever recognized as a Torah scholar and authority, or that he ever led soldiers to war and was victorious on the battlefield.

3. Married with Children

[5] See *Genealogical Scams and Flimflams* – http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Genealogies.pdf

Was Jesus ever married and did he (biologically) father any children? The authors of the New Testament are silent on this matter. According to the New Testament, Jesus never married nor did he father any children. Though Christians generally refer to themselves as the "spiritual" children of Jesus, this is not the same as biological children, which are also referred to as seed, offspring, and progeny.

"Candidate" Jesus passes the "Prior Job Experience" test. However, he does not possess the requisite "Qualifications" to be a viable candidate for the job.

Conclusion: Jesus failed to qualify as candidate for the job

C. Performance Appraisal Criteria – Did Jesus Do the Job Right?

Christianity has claimed Jesus as its Messiah. Therefore, even though he failed to have the requisite qualifications for the position, the evaluation process will continue in order to determine whether he performed that job as required.

1. The Coming of Elijah to Herald the Messiah's Arrival

Jesus claimed that John the Baptist was Elijah:

> **Matthew 11:10-14(KJV) – (10) For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. (11) Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. (12) And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. (13) For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. (14) And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.**

Yet, according to the New Testament, John the Baptist himself denied it:

> **John 1:21(KJV) - And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.**

John the Baptist was also unsure about Jesus being the Messiah:

> **Luke 7:19-20(KJV) – (19) And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? (20) When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?**

Given that Elijah will be announcing the arrival of the Messiah, is it possible that he will not know who the Messiah is?

Moreover, Elijah's mission is clearly defined in the Hebrew Bible. He will herald the arrival of the Messiah (Malachi 3:1), and he will also be the helper and healer, the reconciler and peace-bringer (Malachi 3:23-24[4:4-5]).

The only meaningful conclusion is that Elijah has not yet returned.

2. **Building the Third Temple in Jerusalem**

   The authors of the New Testament are silent about Jesus having built the Third Temple in Jerusalem, and there is no mention of the Third Temple built after his death on the cross. The historical record of the first century C.E. testifies to the fact that the Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 C.E. In contrast, the Hebrew Bible teaches that the future Temple will be permanent, it will not be destroyed.

3. **In-Gathering of the Jewish Exiles to the Promised Land**

   The authors of the New Testament are silent on whether this occurred during the lifetime of Jesus. The historical record of the first century C.E. shows that not only where the all the Jewish people not repatriated to the Holy Land, they were exiled and dispersed into the Diaspora much more than during the previous exile following the destruction of the First Temple in 586 B.C.E.

4. **Reunifying Judah and Israel into One People**

   According to Hebrews 8:8, a misquoted verse from the Hebrew Bible, Judah and Israel were not "one people" during the first century C.E. Eight centuries after the destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and its population dispersed into exile by Assyria, there was only a Judean remnant populating the Holy Land.

5. **Establishing World Peace**

   The historical record of the first century C.E. testifies to the fact that war, not peace, was raging all over the region of the Holy Land and elsewhere in the known world of that time.

6. **Bringing about the Universal Knowledge of God**

   The historical record of the first century C.E. testifies to the fact that paganism was rampant, and that a new false religion, which quickly embraced many of these pagan principles, further diverted people from a universal knowledge of the One God of the Hebrew Bible.

7. **Realizing the Resurrection of the Dead**

   Both the historical record of the first century C.E. and the conflicting accounts in the New Testament lead to the conclusion that no general resurrection of the dead ever took place, and that the story of the alleged "rising from the

dead" of Jesus, even if it were not a myth, does not qualify according to what the Hebrew Bible teaches.

The performance of "Candidate" Jesus did not meet the stated "Performance Appraisal Criteria".

Conclusion: Jesus failed to do the job right

D. Candidate's Score Card

As was already demonstrated, Jesus did not possess the necessary credentials to qualify him as a candidate for the position of Jewish Messiah. Yet, owing to the fact that he is the declared Messiah of Christianity, it was actually possible to evaluate his performance on the job using the criteria provided in the Hebrew Bible. Together, the results of the two phases of the evaluation clearly demonstrate that Jesus did not meet the requirements that would entitle him to the title of Jewish Messiah. Table III.D-1 replicates the "Job Requisition" and includes a scoring column to indicate whether "candidate" Jesus, the Messiah of Christianity, satisfied each of the listed requirements.

Table III.D-1 – Did Christianity's candidate satisfy the job requirements?

Category	Requirements	Met?
Prior Job Experience	None	**Yes**
Qualifications	The successful candidate will possess attributes that must include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:	
	1. Be a direct descendant of King David, through King Solomon	**No**
	2. Be a spiritual and political/military leader	**No**
	3. Be married and have children during	**No**
Performance Appraisal Criteria	The successful candidate will be expected to bring about certain conditions as part of his sovereignty, though some will commence prior to his being identified as Messiah. These must include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following:	
	1. The coming of Elijah to herald the Messiah's arrival	**No**
	2. Building the Third Temple in Jerusalem	**No**
	3. In-gathering of Jewish exiles to the Promised Land	**No**
	4. Reunifying Judah and Israel into one people	**No**
	5. Establishing world peace	**No**
	6. Bringing about the universal knowledge of God	**No**
	7. Realizing the general resurrection of the dead	**No**
Criteria Score Card: 1 "Yes", 10 "No"		

"Candidate" Jesus, the Messiah of Christianity, satisfied only one out of the eleven requirements described in the "Job Requisition" for the position of Jewish Messiah. *Does he qualify for the title of Jewish Messiah? Would you hire him?*

Conclusion: Jesus was a failed candidate for the job of Jewish Messiah

IV. SUMMARY

According to the Hebrew Bible, and as the historical record testifies, the position of Jewish Messiah has not yet been filled, and it remains vacant to this day. Christianity has proclaimed Jesus as its Messiah, and that the New Testament contains the "evidence" – accounts of the fulfillment of literally hundreds of alleged messianic prophecies in the "Old Testament".

A careful analysis of the requirements for identifying מָשִׁיחַ, as set forth in the Hebrew Bible, demonstrates that Christianity's claims concerning its Messiah are incompatible with the vision of the Jewish prophets. The events detailed in the Hebrew Bible as part of the messianic agenda did not occur nor have they been fulfilled. In fact, and quite to the contrary, history shows that exactly the opposite conditions prevailed from the alleged time of the birth of Jesus, during his ministry, and long after his death, even to the present time.

According to the "Job Requisition" model used in this essay, this may be summarized with the following two questions and their respective answers:

Question: Did Jesus, Christianity's "candidate" for the position of Jewish Messiah, qualify for the job?

Answer: No. Jesus did not possess the requisite qualifications for the job.

Question: Did Jesus, the Messiah of Christianity, do the job right?

Answer: No. Jesus did not meet the performance objectives of the job.

The position of מָשִׁיחַ, the Jewish Messiah, remains open!

Special acknowledgment: I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to my colleague, Mr. Shmuel Silberman, for his useful and constructive comments that helped make this presentation a more effective and better product.

WHY JEWS MUST REJECT THE BELIEF IN JESUS[1,2]

I. INTRODUCTION

Topics that deal with the question of whether a Jew should believe in Jesus have been debated for many centuries. Such debates were often "staged" by the Church during the Medieval Period and the Early Modern Period, and Jewish scholars were forced to debate this issue with Church officials (who were often apostate Jews, such as Pablo Christiani, who had the famous "Disputation" with Rabbi Moshe Ben Nachman [RaMBaN; Nachmanides] in 1263 C.E.). When the Jewish side proved the case against believing in Jesus, the aftermath was generally tragic for the Jewish community – book burnings, acts of violence against Jews and their property, and expulsions.

In the Modern Period, particularly in the second half of the 20th century, a paradigm shift took place when some evangelical Christian groups, affiliating themselves under the general banner of "Messianic Judaism", began a massive effort to convert Jews to Christianity, which is commonly known as **Jewish Evangelism**. Debates on questions such as "*Should a Jew believe in Jesus?*" have become commonplace events in "open forum" mode, and their aftermath no longer involves physical violence. However, the absence of physical consequences does not mean that the atmosphere created by these encounters is harmless to Jews. The mega-million dollar and multi-media campaigns and crusades launched by these evangelical Christian missionary groups into locales that have a significant population of Jews can be spiritually very dangerous and damaging to the Jewish community.

If there is one thing on which the Jewish community, with its diverse levels of observance, is in unanimous agreement, it is that a belief in Jesus is incompatible with Judaism. In this essay, the notion of "*Why A Jew Must Reject the Belief in Jesus*" is addressed in detail. The aim here is not to denigrate Christianity and

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1 Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:

- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "h"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

2 Although this essay explicitly addresses Jews, it is implicitly also directed at those who follow the Seven Laws of Noah, the Noahides (***B'nei Noah***), who also are a target of evangelical Christian missionaries.

Christian believers in Jesus; rather, the purpose of this study is to present the Jewish perspective on the question "*Should A Jew Believe in Jesus?*", and highlight the conflicts the belief in Jesus has with the teachings of the Hebrew Bible.

II. REASONS WHY JEWS SHOULD NOT BELIEVE IN JESUS

Although the fact that Christians believe Jesus is the Messiah and Jews do not is a major difference between Christianity and Judaism, it is not the only difference between the two theologies.[3] In the following discussion, the belief that Jesus is the Messiah along with several other key aspects of Jesus' nature which, together, comprise the foundational elements of Christian theology, are contrasted with what the Hebrew Bible teaches.

A. Who Is Jesus to Christians?

The various titles, attributes, and functions of Jesus which are noted in the New Testament tend to blend into one another and, therefore, are difficult to separate. According to mainline Christian beliefs, four key attributes are:

- ✞ **Jesus is the Messiah who fulfilled hundreds of "messianic prophecies" in his "First Coming", and who will preside over the "Kingdom of Heaven" in his "Second Coming"**
- ✞ **Jesus is "God"/"the Lord" who incarnated "in the flesh" in the form of a man**
- ✞ **Jesus is the "only begotten" son of "God" whom "God", out of His love for humanity, sent to earth to be "sacrificed" in order to redeem mankind from the stain of "Original Sin"**
- ✞ **Jesus was a prophet who was the "Moses-like" prophet promised by Moses, and whose miracles rank with the likes of the prophets Elisha and Elijah**

B. What Does the Hebrew Bible Teach?

An important, though often overlooked or neglected fact is that the Scripture in force during the lifetime of Jesus, and even for many years following his death, was the Hebrew Bible. Given this fact, the Christian view of "*Who Is Jesus?*" needs to be validated against what the Hebrew Bible teaches. This is done in terms of the series of claims presented above and respective responses to them.

Christianity's Claim

- ✞ **Jesus is the Messiah who fulfilled hundreds of "messianic prophecies" in his "First Coming", and who will preside over the "Kingdom of Heaven" in his "Second Coming"**

Judaism's Response

[3] Some of the major differences between Christianity and Judaism were examined in the essay, *Judaism and Christianity – The Twain Shall Never Meet* – http://thejewishhome.org/counter/JudChrComp.pdf

Since detailed discussions of the Jewish messianic vision have already been presented in other essays, only the relevant highlights are included in the response to this Christian claim.[4]

✡ The מָשִׁיחַ (*mashi'ah*), Judaism's Messiah

During the first century B.C.E., the Jewish messianic paradigm experienced a significant transformation. It shifted away from the idea of a future blissful era, אַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים (*aharit ha'yamim*), **the end of days**, and evolved into the notion of future mortal leader who will redeem Israel from the oppression the people had been suffering in exile and from enemies who occupied the Holy Land. It was during this time frame that the modern title of מָשִׁיחַ was adopted as the common reference to this individual, who was expected to be the next occupant of the throne of King David. Since the Hebrew Bible speaks of a future king from David's lineage who will preside over a united Israel during a joyful era for Israel, this paradigm shift did not give birth to a new idea, it just refocused the messianic picture.

Several key attributes that characterize the respective central figures of the Jewish and Christian messianic visions are compared in Table II.B-2 below.

Table II.B-1 – Judaism's מָשִׁיחַ vs. Christianity's Messiah, Jesus

Attribute	Judaism's (✡) מָשִׁיחַ	Christianity's (✞) Messiah, Jesus	Compatible … with each other	Compatible … ✞ - with Hebrew Bible*
Pedigree	Will be a bloodline descendant of King David, born of earthly parents	Was born of a virgin who conceived from the Holy Spirit	**NO**	**NO**
Birthplace	Not specified	Bethlehem	**NO**	**NO**
Nature	Will be a mortal human	Is the divine son of God	**NO**	**NO**
Status	Will be served and honored by all nations	Is worshipped	**NO**	**NO**
Function	Will be a righteous king who will redeem and restore Israel	Served as a sin sacrifice to atone for the sins of mankind	**NO**	**NO**
Reign	Earthly kingdom	None (1st advent). Kingdom of heaven (2nd advent)	**NO**	**NO**
Family Status	Will marry and have children	Was not married and did not father children	**NO**	**NO**
Advent	Will make one appearance, which is still being awaited	Came once, died, resurrected, and will come again	**NO**	**NO**

* Judaism's perspective is compatible with the Hebrew Bible by default

[4] *Messiah Wanted* – http://thejewishhome.org/counter/Wanted.pdf, and *Debunking "Proof Texts" from the Psalms: Part 7 – The "Big Picture"* - http://thejewishhome.org/counter/PsalmsPrfTxt7.pdf.

The above comparison demonstrates that the attributes of Jesus gleaned from accounts in the New Testament do not match the attributes described in the Hebrew Bible for the future Davidic king, who will be the מָשִׁיחַ, the promised and still awaited Messiah of Judaism.

✡ The "Messianic Agenda" of Judaism

The "messianic agenda", which was developed primarily through the writings of the prophets, is the centerpiece of Judaism's messianic vision. It consists of prophetic statements which describe, at various level of detail, the global state of affairs that will prevail in the messianic era. This constitutes the collection of "messianic prophecies" in traditional Judaism.

Several key characteristics of the respective prophetic components of the Jewish and Christian messianic visions are compared in Table II.B-2 below.

Table II.B-2 – Judaism's "Messianic Agenda" vs. Christianity's "Messianic Prophecies"

Characteristic	Judaism's (✡) "Messianic Agenda"	Christianity's (✞) "Messianic Prophecies"	Compatible …	
			with each other	✞ - with Hebrew Bible*
Number	Between two- and three-dozen	Over three hundred	**NO**	**NO**
Function	To describe the conditions that will prevail in the messianic era	To describe Jesus, his life's ordeals, and to glorify him	**NO**	**NO**
Status	Unfulfilled. To be executed and completed by the מָשִׁיחַ	Fulfilled by Jesus in his "First Coming"	**NO**	**NO**
Validation	Upon completion, the resultant changes in the world will be real – perceptible, tangible, and "measurable"	Their fulfillment and resultant changes must be accepted on faith	**NO**	**NO**

* Judaism's perspective is compatible with the Hebrew Bible by default

The above comparison demonstrates that Judaism's "messianic agenda" and Christianity's "messianic prophecies" are incompatible. This comparison also shows that the prophetic component of the Christian messianic vision is incompatible with accounts contained in the Hebrew Bible. As was demonstrated in another essay, Jesus did not fulfill any of the "messianic agenda" items.[5]

✡ The Advent of the מָשִׁיחַ

Many of the prophetic passages that comprise Judaism's "messianic agenda" point to a future descendant of King David who will execute this "messianic

[5] See Footnote 4.

agenda" and reign as the King of Israel during the promised future era of bliss, a time characterized by some as an age of universal perfection. Due to the paucity of attributes provided in the Hebrew Bible about this future ruler, the מָשִׁיחַ, it will be possible to identify him only <u>after</u> he already is king. Therefore, in order to qualify, he will have to accomplish the "messianic agenda" at his first advent.

In order to put this into perspective, Table II.B-3 contrasts several of the most important "messianic agenda" items that the מָשִׁיחַ is expected to accomplish against the prevailing conditions during the era in which Jesus, the Messiah of Christianity, lived.

<u>Table II.B-3</u> – "Messianic agenda" items vs. Conditions during the first century C.E.

Item	**To be accomplished by Judaism's (✡) מָשִׁיחַ**	**Conditions during the era of Christianity's (✝) Messiah, Jesus**	**Compatible with…**		
			each other	**Historical Record**	
				✡	✝
1	Elijah the Prophet will appear and herald the arrival of the מָשִׁיחַ	John the Baptist himself said he wasn't Elijah; Elijah never came	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**
2	There will prevail a peaceful coexistence among all nations in the world	War was raging in many parts of the world	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**
3	A universal knowledge and recognition of God will prevail	Paganism was widespread, and a new religion that would soon adopt many pagan ideas, will further divert people from the knowledge of God	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**
4	The Third Temple will be built in Jerusalem	The Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**
5	All exiled Jewish people (the 12 Tribes) will be repatriated to Israel	The Jews were scattered even more than in their previous exile following the destruction of the First Temple	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**
6	"Judah" and "Israel" will be reunited into one people	This never took place; most of "Israel", who were pagans, eventually joined the new religion	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**
7	The dead will be resurrected	This never happened; the story of Jesus' resurrection remains an unconfirmed myth	**NO**	**YES**	**NO**

As the above comparison demonstrates, the historical record indicates that the conditions detailed in the Hebrew Bible as part of the "messianic agenda" were not fulfilled during the era surrounding the life of Jesus. In fact, exactly the opposite conditions prevailed during and following his ministry.

Christian apologists counter this and claim that Jesus will fulfill these items in his "Second Coming". However, this contradicts the accounts in the Hebrew

Bible, which do not include such a concept, and which indicate that the מָשִׁיחַ will fulfill the prophecies outright. Moreover, there is no indication anywhere in the Hebrew Bible that an anointed king of Israel/Judah would come and be sacrificed, via crucifixion, as an offering that would redeem mankind of sin, rise from the grave (i.e., be resurrected), and eventually return to fulfill the messianic prophecies in the Hebrew Bible and preside over an everlasting heavenly kingdom. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the notion of a "Second Coming" seems to have grown out of the recognition by Christian theologians that Jesus did not fulfill the expectations concerning the future state of universal perfection described in the Hebrew Bible. This fact led to the development of a new messianic vision centered on the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as the Christian Messiah.

Conclusion: Jesus cannot be the same as Judaism's מָשִׁיחַ

Christianity's Claim

✞ **Jesus is "God"/"the Lord" who incarnated "in the flesh" in the form of a man**

Judaism's Response

Judaism and Christianity agree on some aspects of the nature of God, such as: God Exists, is Eternal, is the Creator, is Omnipotent, is Omniscient, and is Omnipresent. However, there is a problem with the way that Christianity defines its deity, and this leads to the divergence in the two perspectives.

The major differences in how Judaism and Christianity perceive the nature of God are summarized in Table II.B-4 below, and discussed in greater detail later.

Table II.B-4 – The nature of Judaism's Deity vs. the nature of Christianity's Deity

Item		Judaism's (✡) Deity	Christianity's (✞) Deity	Compatible … with each other	Compatible … ✞ - with Hebrew Bible*
1		Is One and Unique	Is a Trinity	**NO**	**NO**
2	a	Is incorporeal	Incarnated "in the flesh" as a man	**NO**	**NO**
2	b	Is "constant"	Changes	**NO**	**NO**
3		Has no gender	Appears to be a male	**NO**	**NO**

* Judaism's perspective is compatible with the Hebrew Bible by default

Item 1 – The deity in the Hebrew Bible, the God of Israel, is an indivisible Unity. The credo of traditional Judaism, the ***Sh'ma***, describes God as being One (highlighting added for emphasis throughout this document unless otherwise noted):

Deuteronomy 6:4 – Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.

Since the word "One" in this verse is an adjective, it describes the proper noun "the Lord", which rules out the possibility of a "compound unity". The concept of God as an indivisible unity can also be understood from the following passage:

> **Isaiah 44:6 – So said the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer the Lord of Hosts, "I am first and I am last, and besides Me there is no God."**

The declaration by God, "**… I am the first …**", indicates that He has no father. When He said, "**… I am the last …**", it means that He has no begotten son. Finally, when God proclaimed, "**… besides me there is no God …**", it shows that He does not share His role with any other god or entity – He has no "partners".

By contrast, the deity for the overwhelming majority of those who identify with Christianity is a triune godhead consisting of the Father, the Son (who is Jesus), and the Holy Spirit (or Holy Ghost) – the Trinity. The common explanations of the triune nature of the Christian deity vary from the description of the three components as being three separate "persons" at one extreme, to the admission that the Trinity eludes explanations and is a mystery, at the other extreme. In between these two extremes is the description that the Trinity is a "compound unity" – a single entity that has three different personalities or manifestations. The common thread in these descriptions is that all Trinitarians hold the Trinity to be consistent with monotheism. Yet, according to accounts the New Testament, each of the three entities that comprise the Trinity has different knowledge, different powers, and different wills, which is a common characteristic of polytheistic religions.

It is interesting to note that Christian apologists tend to point to a select number of passages in the Christian "Old Testament" to justify the triune nature of their deity via an apparent "plurality" (e.g., Genesis 1:26). Yet, a survey of the Hebrew Bible reveals scores of passages that speak of the Oneness of God, His being alone, His not sharing His glory with any other god, etc., yet not a single passage where God is described as a compound unity that exhibits three manifestations.

Item 2a – The Third Principle of Faith of Rabbi Moshe Ben Maimon [RaMBaM; Maimonides] states that God is incorporeal. This means that He cannot be perceived as having any form, a conclusion that is based on the following passage in the Torah:

> **Deuteronomy 4:15-19 – (15) And you shall watch yourselves very well, for you did not see not any image on the day that the Lord spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire. (16) Lest you become corrupt and make for yourselves a graven image, the representation of any form, the likeness of male or female, (17) the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the heaven, (18) the likeness of anything that crawls on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters, beneath the earth. (19) And lest you lift up your eyes to heaven, and see the sun, and the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, which the Lord your God assigned to all peoples under the entire heaven, and be drawn away to prostrate yourselves before them and worship them.**

Since no form of God was visible and seen during the Revelation at Mount Sinai, the Israelites are told that representing Him via any sort of image is prohibited – God is a spiritual being who cannot be depicted in terms of any likeness.

That God is not a man is taught in the Hebrew Bible on several occasions:

> **Numbers 23:19 – God is not a man that He should lie, nor is He a mortal that He should relent. Would He say and not do, speak and not fulfill?**
>
> **1 Samuel 15:29 - And also, the Eternal One of Israel will neither lie nor repent, for He is not a man to repent."**
>
> **Job 9:32 - For He is not man like I am, that I should answer Him, 'Let us come together in debate.'**

In stark contrast to Judaism's position, the Christian deity took on the form of a man in Jesus.

Item 2b – The view of Judaism that God's nature is "constant", that He does not change, is related to His incorporeal nature, and is reflected in the following passage:

> **Malachi 3:6 - For I, the Lord, have not changed; and you, the sons of Jacob, have not reached the end.**

Yet, Christianity's deity changed from the infinite and transformed itself into the finite form of the man Jesus.

Item 3 – The understanding that God is neither male nor female follows directly from the fact that God is incorporeal (Item 2a). In sharp contrast to the Jewish view, the incarnation of Christianity's deity as the man Jesus makes it a male, as is evident from the New Testament account of Jesus' circumcision:

> **Luke 2:21(KJV) – And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.**

Conclusion: Jesus cannot be the God of the Hebrew Bible and Judaism

Christianity's Claim

- ✞ **Jesus is the "only begotten" son of "God" whom "God", out of His love for humanity, sent to earth to be a "sacrifice" in order to redeem mankind from the stain of "Original Sin"**

Judaism's Response

Of the various Christian positions on the aspects of God's nature being addressed in this essay, this one is perhaps the most extreme relative to what the Hebrew Bible teaches. Several issues that relate to this claim must be addressed: God "begetting" a son, the sacrifice of one's own child, (human) vicarious atonement, and the “direction” of sacrificial offerings described in the

Hebrew Bible. A discussion of the issue concerning the Christian doctrine of "Original Sin" appears in another essay and will not be repeated here. Suffice it to say, Judaism rejects this doctrine.[6]

✡ Would God "beget" a son?

Any dictionary of the English language shows that "to beget" means to procreate, to generate offspring. The question is: *Can this apply to God?* The answer to this question may be deduced by asking some other relevant questions.

Does the Hebrew Bible contain any accounts of God procreating? The answer, of course, is no. God created everything, including our progenitors, Adam and Eve. However, as to the rest of the people, while Jewish tradition holds that God is a "partner" in the process of procreation, they are brought into existence through the biological process where the sperm of the father fertilizes the egg of the mother.

How would God beget offspring, given that He is incorporeal and is neither male nor female (i.e., without genitalia)? There is no answer to this question, though it is not so much an issue of God's ability to procreate as it is a question about *why* He would do it. After all, since God was able to create the first man and woman, *why would there be a need for Him to beget a child if He could have simply created a child?*

The Hebrew Bible contains references to relationships in which God is in the role of the Father to various individuals and to the nation of Israel as a whole:

> **Exodus 4:22 - And you [Moses] shall say to Pharaoh, 'So said the Lord, "My firstborn son is Israel."'** [Israel]
>
> **2 Samuel 7:14 - I will be to him a father, and he shall be to Me a son; so that when he goes astray I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the sons of Adam.** [King Solomon]
>
> **Psalms 2:7 - I will tell of the decree; The Lord said to me, "You are My son; this day have I begotten you.** [Kind David]
>
> **Psalms 89:27-28 – (27) He will call to Me, 'You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.' (28) I, too, shall make him a firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.** [King David's descendants who will sit on his throne, including מָשִׁיחַ]
>
> **1 Chronicles 29:10 - And David blessed the Lord before the eyes of the entire assembly, and David said, "Blessed are You, the God of Israel our Father, from everlasting to everlasting.** [Israel]

When these passages are read in context, it becomes evident that all these "father-son" relationships are metaphorical, they involve spiritual, not biological, children of God [**"… the God of Israel our Father …"**].

[6] See Footnote 3.

Does the use of "firstborn" in Exodus 4:22 and Psalms 89:28 imply this son was "begotten"? The answer to this question is "*no*". Being called the "firstborn" symbolizes greatness. For Israel as a nation, Exodus 4:22 not only implies the universal fatherhood of God, but that, among all the nations, which are God's children too, Israel is spiritually the firstborn, the nation that is destined to be "a light unto the nations". For King David, Psalms 89:28 indicates his status, his being the greatest of all the kings.

Is not the explicit use of "begotten" in Psalms 2:7 an example where God "begot" a son? The answer to this question is "*no*", since David had an earthly father, Jesse, who "begot" him, and he was the youngest of Jesse's sons. This figuratively refers to the day of David's enthronement, at which time he became God's servant who would guide the destiny of His people.

An interesting observation is that, according to Christian theology, the Christian deity fathered Jesus. *How and when was this done?*

> **Matthew 1:18-20(KJV) – (18) Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. (19) Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. (20) But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.**

According to this account, the Christian deity impregnated Mary while she was betrothed to Joseph. *What form did the Holy Ghost assume during this mission? Was the Holy Ghost in the image of a man?* This incident could be construed as rape, and, recalling that the Hebrew Bible was the Scripture in force at that time, the Torah states the following:

> **Deuteronomy 22:25-27 – (25) But if a man finds the betrothed girl in the field, and the man overpowers her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her shall die. (26) Whereas to the girl, you shall do nothing the girl did not commit a sin deserving of death, for just as a man rises up against his fellow and murders him, so is this case. (27) Because he found her in the field. The betrothed girl had cried out, but there was no one to save her.**

Why would God want to break His own law and produce a child by raping a betrothed woman rather than create this child in a way that would not violate Torah? None of this makes any logical sense relative to the Hebrew Bible.

✡ Did God sacrifice His "only begotten" son?

Huh? Assume, for the sake of argument, that God actually "begot" a son. According to the Hebrew Bible, God abhors child sacrifice:

> **Deuteronomy 18:10 - There shall not be found among you anyone who passes his son or daughter through fire, a soothsayer, a diviner of [auspicious] times, one**

> **who interprets omens, or a sorcerer,** [See also Leviticus 18:21, Jeremiah 7:31, 19:32; Ezekiel 23:37-39.]

Would God sacrifice His "only begotten" son and, thus, violate His own law? You decide!

✡ Would God participate in an act of human vicarious atonement?

According to the Hebrew Bible, human vicarious (i.e., substitution) atonement is strictly prohibited; every person is responsible for his or her own sins:

> **Deuteronomy 24:16 - Fathers shall not be put to death because of children, nor shall children be put to death for fathers; each person shall be put to death for his own sin.** [See also Exodus 32:31-33; Numbers 35:33.]
>
> **2 Kings 14:6 - And the sons of the assassins he did not execute, as it is written in the book of the Torah of Moses, which the Lord commanded saying: "Fathers shall not be put to death for sons, nor shall sons be put to death for fathers, but each man shall be put to death for his own sin."** [See also Jeremiah 31:29{30 in Christian Bibles}; Ezekiel 18:4,20; Psalms 49:7-8.]

In other words, the concept of human vicarious atonement goes against Torah, and contradicts the inspired words throughout the rest of the Hebrew Bible. *Would God violate his own law?*

✡ Would God offer a sacrifice for humankind?

The Hebrew Bible lists and describes various types of sacrificial offerings and contains numerous accounts of sacrificial offerings that were made. Without exception, *all* the accounts of sacrificial offerings contained in the Hebrew Bible went in one direction, from humans to God. There is not a single case described in the Hebrew Bible where God offers a sacrifice on behalf of mankind. Sacrificial offerings are a “One Way Street” – from mankind to God.

Conclusion: Jesus could not have been the "begotten" son of "God" whose purpose was to serve as a sacrificial offering that would redeem mankind from the stain of "Original Sin"

Christianity's Claim

✞ **Jesus was the "Moses-like" prophet promised by Moses, and whose miracles rank with the likes of Elisha and Elijah**

Judaism's Response

According to Jewish tradition and beliefs, it is held that true prophecy was removed from the world after the last prophets who lived at the time of the

destruction of the First Temple, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, passed on.[7] This situation was foretold by the psalmist Asaph:

> **Psalms 74:9 - Our signs we have not seen, there is no longer a prophet; and there is none among us who knows for how long.**

An integral part of Judaism's messianic vision is that prophecy will return in the messianic era:

> **Joel 3:1 - And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your elders shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions;**
>
> **Malachi 3:23[4:5 in Christian Bibles] - Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord;**

The מָשִׁיחַ himself will be endowed with the gift of prophecy.

✡ The Torah's "litmus test" for prophets

The Hebrew Bible provides a "*litmus test*", designed ostensibly to identify false prophets; a test that is valid even after a given prophet passes on – the prophetic horizon, though not unlimited, is definitely not constrained by a prophet's own lifetime:

> **Deuteronomy 13:2-6 – (2) If there arise in the midst of you a prophet, or a dreamer of a dream; and he gives you a sign or a wonder, (3) and the sign or the wonder whereof he spoke unto you occurs, [and he] says, "Let us go after other gods which you have not known, and let us worship them"; (4) you shall not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or unto that dreamer of a dream; for the Lord, your God, is testing you, to know whether you truly love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul. (5) You shall follow the Lord, your God, and Him you shall fear, and His commandments you shall keep, and unto His voice you shall hearken, and Him you shall worship, and unto Him you shall cleave. (6) And that prophet or that dreamer of a dream shall be put to death, because he spoke falsehood about the Lord, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and who redeemed you from the house of bondage, to lead you astray from the way in which the Lord, your God, commanded you to go; and so you shall remove the evil from your midst.**
>
> **Deuteronomy 18:22 - If a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord and the thing does not happen nor does it come to pass, that is the thing the Lord has not spoken; and the prophet has spoken it wantonly, you shall not fear him.**

These passages contain the following criteria for identifying false prophets:

- **One who claims to have been sent by God to advocate idolatry**
- **One who proclaims the permanent abrogation of any precept in the Torah**
- **One whose prediction used as credentials for his/her divine call is not fulfilled**

[7] According to traditional Jewish belief, prophecy can only exist in the Land of Israel when a majority of the world's Jews resides there, which has not been the case from the time of the destruction of the First Temple and Babylonian exile to this day.

According to Torah, false prophecy is punishable by death, a penalty that must be administered by a human tribunal:

> **Deuteronomy 18:20 - But the prophet who shall wantonly speak a word in My name which I did not command him to speak, or who shall speak in the name of other gods; that prophet shall die.**

The true prophets of Israel chastised the people for not doing God's will and for turning from God's laws. They always acted according God's will and in accordance with the Torah and its immutability, never on their own authority. Jesus, on the other hand, although he chastised his people as did the true prophets of Israel, justified his actions on his own authority and, therefore, he did not follow the path of the true prophets of Israel.

The New Testament contains numerous accounts to which Christian apologists point as being prophetic statements by Jesus. They also claim that some of these were even fulfilled, although the validity of those claims is questionable. However, many statements attributed to Jesus, which were clearly intended to be prophetic, were not fulfilled at all. One such example is when he tells his disciples about his imminent return, his "Second Coming":

> **Matthew 16:28(KJV) - Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.**

- **THIS "PROPHECY" WAS NOT FULFILLED! The generation that Jesus addressed died some 19 centuries ago!**

Another example of a "prophecy" about his "Second Coming" is the following:

> **Mark 1:14-15(KJV) – (14) Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, (15) And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.**

- **THIS "PROPHECY" WAS NOT FULFILLED! 19 centuries have passed and the "Kingdom of God" has not yet arrived!**

Jesus, addressing the scribes and Pharisees, allegedly prophesied his death and resurrection:

> **Matthew 12:38-40(KJV) – (38) Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. (39) But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: (40) For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.**

- **THE "PROPHECY" OF THE "SIGN OF JONAH" [3 DAYS & 3 NIGHTS] WAS NOT FULFILLED! Jesus was "in the heart of the earth" 36 hours or less. According to the Gospel of Luke, he died Friday afternoon and "rose" Sunday before dawn. When the women reached his tomb, he was**

already gone (Luke 23:54--24:3). According to the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus remained in the tomb from Friday afternoon until Saturday evening at nightfall - a total of some 26 hours (Matthew 28:1)!

- **THE ENTIRE "PROPHECY" WAS NOT FULFILLED! Jesus addressed his doubters, the scribes and Pharisees, with this "prophecy". Why did he not appear to them following his alleged resurrection? According to the accounts in the New Testament, the "witnesses" were his followers, on whose accounts of the resurrection one is expected to rely.**

According to the "*litmus test*" from the Torah, even a single false prophecy is sufficient to brand an individual as a false prophet, which makes him punishable with death by execution.

✡ Miracles and their purpose

Unique among the religions of the world, Judaism is based on a national revelation, not on claims of miracles performed by an individual. The "personal revelation" claimed by founders of some major religions must be accepted by others purely on faith, even if their founders perform miracles to try to support their claim. Miracles, even if they are genuine, may only indicate that an individual has certain powers, but do not prove his or her being a true prophet. One of the "*litmus test*" passages above specifically warns the Israelites about such individuals (Deuteronomy 13:2-4).

In performing miracles, a true prophet of Israel did so in the name of God and on His authority, with the objective of strengthening people's belief in God and drawing them nearer to Him.

According to accounts recorded in the New Testament, Jesus, too, is said to have performed miracles. However, in contrast to the actions of any of the true prophets of Israel, Jesus declared miracles on his own authority, and he performed them in order to make people believe in him.

Conclusion: If Jesus was a prophet at all, he was not a prophet of God; rather, he was a false prophet!

III. SUMMARY

In this essay the validity of four of the main Christian claims concerning the nature of Jesus was examined relative to the Hebrew Bible, the Scripture in force during the era in which Jesus is said to have lived and ministered, and even for many years thereafter. The results of the analysis are summarized in Table III.1 below.

<u>Table III.1</u> – Summary of claims and responses

Christianity's (✞) Claim:	Judaism's (✡) Response:	
	Is it acceptable to a Jew?	Why? According to the Hebrew Bible…
Jesus is the Messiah who came, died, and resurrected, and who will return	No	Jesus is disqualified. The promised מָשִׁיחַ will accomplish the "messianic agenda" in his first appearance.
Jesus is "God" who came to earth incarnated in the flesh	No	God is not a man. God has no form and He does not change.
Jesus, the son of "God", is the sacrifice that redeemed mankind from sin	No	God does not procreate; He can forgive sins without the need for a human sacrifice, which he abhors.
Jesus was a prophet and performed miracles	No	Jesus was a false prophet; he failed the "litmus test".

The typical Christian apologist will attempt to counter these facts from the Hebrew Bible with various arguments that are based on accounts in the New Testament as well as on misinterpreted and mistranslated passages from the Christian "Old Testament". The doctrine that all people, Jews and Gentiles alike, must believe in Jesus and be baptized in order to be "saved" appears in Peter's sermon:

> **<u>Acts 2:38(KJV)</u> - Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.**

Jews who are approached by Christian missionaries should remember the following point-by-point summary of the lessons brought forth in this essay:

- ✡ **A JEW MUST REJECT THE IDEA THAT JESUS WAS THE MESSIAH since he did not fulfill the prophecies that constitute the "messianic agenda", the best evidence for this being that, at no time following his arrival and death was the world redeemed – tragedy, suffering, and pain are still rampant throughout the world.**
- ✡ **A JEW MUST REJECT THE NOTION THAT JESUS WAS GOD INCARNATED since this violates a cardinal tenet of Judaism, namely, that God is purely spiritual and is incorporeal.**
- ✡ **A JEW MUST REJECT JESUS AS THE DIVINE BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD since God does not generate progeny. At best, one can recognize Jesus as just another spiritual child of God in the sense that all people are His children.**
- ✡ **A JEW MUST REJECT THE IDEA OF HUMAN VICARIOUS ATONEMENT IN RELATIONSHIP TO HIS OWN DELIVERANCE since this is prohibited in the Torah. The Hebrew Bible teaches that every person is responsible for his or her own sins; no other person can take on someone's sins, suffer their consequences, and thereby absolve the sinner. Related to this is the notion that a Jew does not need a mediator, not even a symbolic one, in his or her relationship with God; Jews approach God directly.**

The notion that a person can be redeemed ("saved") only by accepting the belief in Jesus, and that all those who do not do that are condemned to roast in (the Christian concept of) "hell", is not only repugnant to Judaism, it is antithetical to the idea of compassion and justice.

There are Christian leaders have retreated from this requirement, and have accepted the idea that Jews have their own path to God, as demonstrated in the following excerpt from a sermon delivered by The Reverend Dr. Frank G. Kirkpatrick of the Trinity Episcopal Church in Hartford, Connecticut:

> **In the Lectionary which determines what Biblical passages are to be read each Sunday, this particular day gives the option of leaving out Acts 13:44-52. I have deliberately chosen to leave it in, replacing a passage from the Book of Revelation. The reason why I chose to leave it in is because I want to confront head-on the incendiary and historically momentous words of Paul, who says to people who are indiscriminately called "the Jews", "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you reject it and judge yourselves to be unworthy of eternal life, we are now turning to the Gentiles."**
>
> **On these words, plus some others from the New Testament, an entire history of anti-Semitism and Christian triumphalist exclusivism has been built. Simply put, Christians over the ages have been taught that the Jews (an unspecific term) have rejected Jesus as their savior and in the process condemned themselves and all their descendants to eternal damnation. At the same time Christians have declared themselves to have been the replacement for the Jews in the eternal covenant with God.**
>
> **…[snipped]…**
>
> **In claiming the power of the revelation of God through Jesus, we Christians need not feel threatened when others have found that same God in other ways. Slowly, even the official voices of Christianity, from the Pope and major religious spokespeople, have been coming to acknowledge that Judaism, in particular, has no need of the Christian way to God. God established an everlasting covenant with the Jews at Mt. Sinai. And as one who never breaks His promise, God has remained faithful to that covenant, which bound him as much as it did the people of Israel. It is arrogant and exclusivist for Christians to claim that the Jews need Jesus to find God. The Jews have God already, in the Torah, in the Covenant, in the very being of a people who have survived against all odds and persecution down through the centuries. Why would Christians insist that Jews still don't have enough of God and that they now also need Jesus? This makes no sense.**[8]

Thank you, The Reverend Dr. Frank G. Kirkpatrick!

[8] The complete sermon by The Reverend Dr. Frank G. Kirkpatrick, who is also Professor of Religion at Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut, may be found on the Internet: *Why Jews Don't Need Jesus* - http://www.trinityhartford.org/s050904.htm.

A PIERCING LOOK AT A FALSE CLAIM[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

Christian missionaries use the verse Zechariah 12:10 as a so-called "proof text" to support their claim that the crucifixion of Jesus was foretold in the Hebrew Bible. Although the passage is problematic for this purpose even in the variety of its mistranslated versions that appear in most Christian Bibles, a slight modification in the manner in which it is applied in one of the Gospels was designed to “fix” this difficulty. However, a rigorous analysis of this passage and the entire chapter demonstrates that such imputed Christological relevance is absurd.

II. THE HEBREW TEXT AND SEVERAL CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH TRANSLATIONS

Table II-1 displays the Hebrew text of Zechariah 12:10, along with five Jewish translations and seven Christian translations. The New American Standard Bible (NASB) shows two cross-referenced passages in the New Testament for Zechariah 12:10. These passages, shown below Table II-1, are quoted from the King James Version (KJV).

<u>Table II-1</u> – The Hebrew Text of Zechariah 12:10 with Jewish and Christian Translations

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Hebrew Text of Zechariah 12:10 - זכריה יב,י</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">וְשָׁפַכְתִּי עַל־בֵּית דָּוִיד וְעַל יוֹשֵׁב יְרוּשָׁלַםִ רוּחַ חֵן וְתַחֲנוּנִים וְהִבִּיטוּ אֵלַי אֵת אֲשֶׁר־דָּקָרוּ
וְסָפְדוּ עָלָיו כְּמִסְפֵּד עַל־הַיָּחִיד וְהָמֵר עָלָיו כְּהָמֵר עַל־הַבְּכוֹר׃</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">Jewish Translations of Zechariah 12:10</th></tr>
<tr><td>ArtScroll Stone Edition Tanach;
ArtScroll/Mesorah</td><td>I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplications. They will look toward Me because of those whom they have stabbed, they will mourn over him as one mourns over an only [child], and be embittered over him like the embitterment over a [deceased] firstborn.</td></tr>
</table>

[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:
- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as “h̲”
  - The letter כ is transliterated as “ch”
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as “k”
  - The letter ק is transliterated as “q”
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted “e” following the consonant
  - There is no “doubling” of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

Jewish Publication Society Bible (1917)	And **I** will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; **and they shall look unto Me because they have thrust him through**; **and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son**, **and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born**.
Judaica Press NACH Series; translation by Rabbi A. J. Rosenberg	And **I** will pour out upon the House of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem with a spirit of grace and supplications. **And they shall look to me because of those who have been thrust through [with swords]**, **and they shall mourn over it as one mourns over an only son** **and shall be in bitterness, therefore, as one is embittered over a firstborn son**.
The Jerusalem Bible, Koren Publishing	But **I** will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Yerushalayim the spirit of grace and of supplication: **and they shall look towards me, regarding those whom the nations have thrust through**. **And they shall mourn for him (that is slain) as one mourns for an only son**, **and shall be in bitterness over him, as one that is in bitterness for a firstborn**.
Soncino Books of the Bible; edited by Rabbi Dr. A. Cohen	And **I** will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; **and they shall look unto Me, because they have thrust him through**; **and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son**, **and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born**.
Christian Translations of Zechariah 12:10	
Darby Translation	And **I** will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplications; **and they shall look on me whom they pierced**, **and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for an only [son]**, **and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for [his] firstborn**.
King James Version (KJV)	And **I** will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: **and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced**, **and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son**, **and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn**.
New American Standard Bible (NASB)	**I** will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, **so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced**(i); **and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son**, **and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn**.
New International Version (NIV)	And **I** will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. **They will look on me, the one they have pierced**, **and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child**, **and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son**.
New Living Translation (NLT)	Then **I** will pour out a spirit of grace and prayer on the family of David and on all the people of Jerusalem. **They will look on me whom they have pierced** **and mourn for him as for an only son**. **They will grieve bitterly for him as for a firstborn son who has died**.
Revised Standard Version (RSV)	And **I** will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of compassion and supplication, so that, **when they look on him whom they have pierced**, **they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child**, **and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a first-born**.

Young's Literal Translation (YLT)	And **I** have poured on the house of David, And on the inhabitant of Jerusalem, A spirit of grace and supplications, **And they have looked unto Me whom they pierced**, **And they have mourned over it, Like a mourning over the only one**, **And they have been in bitterness for it, Like a bitterness over the first-born**.

(i) Cross-referenced New Testament passages for the word "pierced" in Zechariah 12:10:
John 19:37(KJV) - And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.
Revelation 1:7(KJV) - Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

It is interesting to note that, in spite of minor variations, the Jewish translations are generally consistent, and the Christian translations are generally consistent (the exception is the RSV). However, these two groups of translations show significant differences relative to each other, as indicated by the highlighted phrases, and these form the basis for the analysis of this verse.

III. OVERVIEW OF CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH INTERPRETATIONS

A. Overview of the Christian perspective

Zechariah 12:10 is perceived by Christians as foretelling the crucifixion of Jesus and the grief that followed, a concept that is reinforced in New Testament narratives. The author of the Gospel of John quotes almost verbatim the specific phrase of the verse that allegedly foretells the crucifixion, albeit with the help of some revision of the text that appears in the Hebrew:

> **John 19:37(KJV) - And again another scripture saith, They shall look on HIM whom they pierced.**

Then, with some help from the Book of Revelation (believed to have been authored by the same person), the connection with Zechariah 12:10 is reinforced:

> **Revelation 1:7(KJV) - Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.**

The passage in the Gospel of John that leads up to the verse quoted above sheds some light on the Christian scenario:

> **John 19:31-36(KJV) – (31) The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. (32) Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. (33) But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: (34) But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. (35) And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. (36) For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.**

Depending on how a person got crucified, death could have been relatively quick, or relatively slow. Suspension from the hands or wrists nailed to the crossbeam,

without having the feet supported in some manner, would cause the body's weight to collapse the chest cavity and result in death from asphyxiation – a fairly rapid process. However, when the feet were supported, either with a small wooden pedestal beneath them or by being nailed to the central-beam of the cross, a person could stay alive for as much as several days.

Jewish Law requires a prompt burial following a person's death:

> **Deuteronomy 21:22-23 – (22) And if a man were to commit a sin deserving death, and he were to be put to death, and you hanged him on a tree. (23) His body shall not remain upon the tree overnight, rather you shall surely bury him on that [same] day, for a hanged one is a cursed of God; and you shall not defile your land, which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance.**

Thus, during the era of the Roman occupation, it was customary for the Jews to plead with the Romans to break the leg bones of Jewish people who were crucified, in order to quicken their death and, thereby, enable their burial within the required amount of time.

According to the account in the Gospel of John, there was no need to break the legs of Jesus. The Roman soldiers who approached Jesus perceived that he was already dead, and then they stabbed his side with a sword to confirm that he had expired. This act was depicted as yet another prophecy fulfilled some two millennia ago, and which also identified Jesus with the *Passover Lamb* (e.g., 1Corinthians 5:7), since the requirements specified in the Torah included the prohibition against breaking any of its bones:

> **Exodus 12:46 - In one house it shall be eaten; you shall not bring from the house any of the meat outdoors; neither shall you break any bone of it.**

More detailed Christian interpretations of Zechariah 12:10, which are beyond the scope of this essay, may be found in the standard Christian sources, such as the commentaries of Matthew Henry and Jamieson, Fausset, & Brown.[2]

B. The Jewish perspective

From the Jewish perspective, two classes of interpretations of the passage that contains the verse Zechariah 12:10 have been proposed. One has it as an historical Biblical event from the prophet's own era, while the other considers it a prophecy of an event that will take place at some future time just prior to the commencement of the messianic era.

1. Historical event

Although it is difficult to find a specific time in Jewish history that fits well with the events that are described in this chapter, the predominant view on Zechariah 12:10 among the Jewish commentators is that it describes the

[2] These commentaries, along with others, are available at - http://www.blueletterbible.org/

mourning over those Jews who were slain while defending something precious to them – their country, their city, and, perhaps also their faith. Those who fell in the battle were the ones described as having been *thrust through* with the swords and spears of soldiers from the attacking nations. In other words, this verse describes an historical event from the general Biblical era around which this account was written.

The noted Christian commentator S. R. Driver took exception to the common Christian interpretation of Zechariah 12:10, stating in his commentary:[3]

> **"The context points plainly to some historical event in the prophet's own time, for which the people would eventually feel that sorrow here described."**

Driver apparently recognized that the passage describes an historical event from Zechariah's era. He actually went further and suggested that some of the events described in this chapter suit the situation that existed during the time of the Maccabees.[4]

Several modern Jewish commentators consider this verse as alluding to the death of some unknown Jewish martyr who was killed by the people. They speculate this could have been God's appointed leader of a restored Jewish nation, whom they eventually put to death.

2. Messianic prophecy

The other interpretation of this passage, which originates in the Talmud, holds that it is a messianic prophecy. Although Christianity also views this passage as messianic, according to the traditional Jewish concept of the Messiah, this prophecy has not yet been fulfilled.

Since there is an ambiguity in the Hebrew text in terms of whether the subject (i.e., the "victim") is an individual or a group – the particular pronouns used here are applied to both in the Hebrew Bible – there are two ways to interpret this passage within this messianic perspective. Both interpretations are consistent with the Hebrew text as well as with Jewish tradition.

The "singular pronoun scenario" depicts a great hero who will fall in the battle of the nations against Jerusalem, described earlier in the same chapter (Zechariah 12:3). Because this person will be one of towering stature among the Jewish people, the mourning for him will be great and widespread; the entire nation and all of Jerusalem are described as being in a state of great mourning (Zechariah 12:12). As had happened in previous times, the crying and mourning is a vehicle that leads people to repent and return to observance of Torah:

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[3] Quoted from *Soncino Books of the Bible - Zechariah*, Rev. Dr. A. Cohen (Editor), p. 322; Soncino Press (1983)
[4] Ibid, p. 320

Numbers 14:39-40 – (39) And Moses spoke these words to all the Children of Israel; and the people mourned greatly. (40) And they arose early in the morning, and they ascended to the top of the mountain, saying; "Behold, we are here, and we will go up to the place of which the Lord has spoken, for we have sinned."

This particular scenario fits well with the "two Messiahs" paradigm. According to this Talmudic tradition, the first "Messiah", מָשִׁיחַ בֶּן־יוֹסֵף (***mashi'ah ben Yosef***), **Messiah son of Joseph**, will be a hero out of either of the tribes that emerged from Joseph – Ephraim and Menasheh. He will fight and be killed in the Great War, an event that will be the catalyst for all of Israel to turn to God and repent. After that, מָשִׁיחַ בֶּן־דָּוִד (***mashi'ah ben David***), **Messiah son of David**, the Davidic Messiah, will appear and usher in the messianic era and its promised redemption of Israel.

The intensity of the sadness is quantified in the very next verse:

Zechariah 12:11 - On that day there shall be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the Valley of Megiddon.

Here, the mourning in Jerusalem is compared with the mourning in the valley of Megiddo, a reference to the death of King Josiah, the last of the great and righteous kings of Judah (see 2Kings 23:25), who was killed in a battle with Pharaoh Necho, King of Egypt:

2Kings 23:29-30 – (29) In his [Josiah's] days, Pharaoh Necho, King of Egypt, went up against the King of Assyria by the Euphrates River; and King Josiah went against him, and he [Pharaoh Necho] killed him [Josiah] at Megiddo, when he saw him. (30) And his servants transported him dead from Megiddo, and [they] brought him to Jerusalem, and [they] buried him in his grave; and the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and anointed him, and made him king in his father's stead. {See also 2Chronicles 35:22-24.]

Following Josiah's death, the mourning throughout the Kingdom of Judah and in Jerusalem was immense, as alluded to by Jeremiah, and as recorded in the historical books:

Lamentations 4:20 - The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was captured in their pits, of whom we said, "In his protection we shall live among the nations."

2Chronicles 35:24-25 - (24) And his servants took him from that chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had, and they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and he was buried among the graves of his forefathers; and all of Judah and Jerusalem were mourning for Josiah. (25) And Jeremiah lamented Josiah; and all the singing men and the singing women had spoken of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them a statute upon Israel; and behold, they are written in the lamentations.

According to the Sages of the Talmud, these descriptions also characterize the magnitude of the grief that will prevail over the death of מָשִׁיחַ בֶּן־יוֹסֵף, who will be slain in the war of Gog and Magog (see Ezekiel Chapters 38&39).

In the "plural pronoun scenario", the singular pronoun is applied to a group of Jewish people, a usage that is common in the Hebrew Bible [for example, in Exodus 1:4 the Jewish people, i.e., the nation of Israel, are referred to by the same singular pronoun עָלָיו (*a̲LAV*), **over/upon/for him**]. According to Zechariah 12:10, the new spirit that God will pour unto the Jewish people will motivate them to look toward Him concerning those Jewish martyrs who fell in the battle over Jerusalem before His divine intervention on their behalf. Here, as was the case in the previous scenario, the intensity of the mourning over those who will fall in the Great War of the future is still reflected via the historical references that appear at Zechariah 12:11.

In summary, the Jewish perspective on Zechariah 12:10 is that it may be viewed either as an historical biblical event or, alternatively, as a messianic event that is yet to be fulfilled. Neither of these interpretations can accommodate, nor agrees with the Christian view that it is a messianic prophecy that was fulfilled with the crucifixion of Jesus.

IV. PRONOUNS AND CONTEXT: A CLOSER LOOK AT THE VERSE

As noted above, the Christian interpretation of this passage as foretelling the crucifixion of Jesus is problematic. An analysis of the KJV rendition, which represents a typical Christian translation of Zechariah 12:10, helps illustrate some of the salient issues. To facilitate the analysis, the KJV rendition is divided into two segments:

> **<u>Zechariah 12:10A(KJV)</u> - And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications:**

> **<u>Zechariah 12:10B(KJV)</u> - and THEY shall look upon ME whom they have pierced, and THEY shall mourn for HIM, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for HIM, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.**

All translation of Zechariah 12:10A share the following attributes:

- **Variations among virtually <u>all</u> translations, both Jewish and Christian, are insignificant; they <u>all</u> agree on context and content.**
- **In <u>all</u> translations, both Jewish and Christian, it is clear that God of the Hebrew Bible, the Creator, is speaking here, i.e., "… I [God] will pour …"**

In other words, there is general agreement on the context of Zechariah 12:10(A). However, this is not the case with Zechariah 12:10B(KJV), which is problematic and, thus, requires additional analysis.

A. Who are "THEY", who is "ME", and who is "HIM"?

Adding the bracketed comments that reflect the Christian perspective (see below) to Zechariah 12:10B(KJV) clarifies its syntax and brings to light the inherent problems with the typical Christian interpretation of this passage:

> **and THEY [*the Jews {or the Romans}*] shall look upon ME [*Jesus*] whom THEY [*the Romans*] have pierced; and THEY [*the Jews*] shall mourn for HIM [*Jesus*] as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for HIM [*Jesus*] as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.**

Given that God is the speaker, and that, for most of Christendom, Jesus is part of the triune godhead (the Trinity), can the pronouns "**ME**" and "**HIM**", as they appear in this passage, refer to the same entity, namely, to Jesus? The answer is, "No, these pronouns cannot refer to the same entity simultaneously since the prophet is unambiguously speaking of two distinct entities." In addition, there is the issue of the pronoun "**I**", as used in Zechariah 12:10A. *How is it possible that God speaks in the 1st-person in Zechariah 12:10A and then refers to Himself as both "**ME**" and "**HIM**" in Zechariah 12:10B?* Clearly, this is absurd!

B. The New Testament to the rescue?

Evidently, the author of the Gospel of John was familiar with this passage in the Book of Zechariah, and he understood its problematic nature relative to the new religion. To interpret this passage as saying that, at some future time, the Jewish people shall look unto Jesus, whom the Romans had pierced, did not appear to him to be what Zechariah had in mind. So he decided to "fix" this problem by altering and abridging the passage in the following manner:

> **John 19:37(KJV) - And again another scripture saith, THEY shall look on HIM whom THEY pierced.**

The RSV translators utilized this passage in the New Testament to alter the context of Zechariah's own words in their translation of Zechariah 12:10 -

> **Zechariah 12:10(RSV) - And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of compassion and supplication, so that, when THEY look on HIM whom THEY have pierced, THEY shall mourn for HIM, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over HIM, as one weeps over a first-born.**

Although this appears to solve the problem created by the two distinct pronouns "**ME**" and "**HIM**", it does not resolve the identity issue that exists between the two segments of this verse, Zechariah 12:10A&B. Moreover, the RSV rendition is a deliberate attempt to revise the prophet's original words, and was designed to "harmonize" this passage and the Christian paradigm. The evidence to support this statement is presented in Table IV.B-1, which shows the Hebrew text, a Jewish translation, and the RSV rendition of Zechariah 12:10B broken into three components, with respective terms highlighted.

Table IV.B-1 – Comparing RSV translation with Hebrew text and Jewish translation

	Revised Standard Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew (reflecting the various published Jewish translations)	Hebrew Text
	Zechariah 12:10B		זכריה יב,י [ב]
i	so that, when **THEY** look **ON HIM** whom **THEY** have pierced,	and **THEY** shall look **to ME** because of **HIM/THEM** who **THEY** [the enemy] thrust through	וְהִבִּיטוּ אֵלַי אֵת אֲשֶׁר־דָּקָרוּ

ii	**THEY** shall mourn **for HIM**, as one mourns for an only child,	and **THEY** shall mourn **over HIM/THEM** as one mourns over an only son,	וְסָפְדוּ עָלָיו כְּמִסְפֵּד עַל־הַיָּחִיד
iii	and weep bitterly **over HIM**, as one weeps over a first-born.	and be embittered **over HIM/THEM** as one is embittered over a firstborn son.	וְהָמֵר עָלָיו כְּהָמֵר עַל־הַבְּכוֹר׃

The significant Hebrew pronouns in the respective phrases of Zechariah 12:10B are as follows:

- **Zechariah 12:10B(i) – Pronoun is אֵלַי (*eiLAI*), to ME or toward ME**
- **Zechariah 12:10B(ii) – Pronoun is עָלָיו (*aLAV*), over HIM or upon HIM or for HIM**
- **Zechariah 12:10B(iii) – Pronoun is עָלָיו (*aLAV*), over HIM or upon HIM or for HIM**

The combination of these two terms, אֵלַי and עָלָיו, occurring in the same verse, is found at Genesis 44:21, a verse that is translated correctly in the RSV:

> **Genesis 44:21(RSV) - Then you said to your servants, "Bring him down TO ME [אֵלַי], that I may set my eyes UPON HIM [עָלָיו]."**

The RSV version of Zechariah 12:10B(i) reflects John 19:37 rather than follow the text in the Hebrew Bible, which reveals the “unholy” motive of the translators.

Also interesting to note is that, according to the Gospel of John, the prophecy was fulfilled at the time when the Roman soldiers pierced the side of Jesus. Yet, neither the New Testament nor the historical record account for the fulfillment of the part of the prophecy in which all the inhabitants of Jerusalem would mourn for Jesus. Quite to the contrary, the New Testament portrays the Jews, who were the majority of Jerusalem's population, as being anything but compassionate and mournful over the death of Jesus. Clearly, this prophecy was not fulfilled when Jesus died!

C. How well did Christian translators know the Hebrew language?

There is yet another serious problem with common Christian renditions of this verse, one that stems from a lack of knowledge and understanding of the Hebrew language and its idioms. At issue is the mistranslation of the Hebrew expression אֵת אֲשֶׁר־דָּקָרוּ (***ET aSHER-daQARu***) found at Zechariah 12:10B(i), the correct translation of which is: **because of** (or, **concerning**) **him who they pierced** [or, alternatively, **because of** (or, **concerning**) **the ones who they pierced**].

The Hebrew words אֵת (***ET***) [אֶת־ when in a hyphenated phrase] and אֲשֶׁר (***aSHER***) are ubiquitous in the Hebrew Bible. אֵת is a preposition that serves as the marker of a definite direct object of a verb. In its root form, it is similar to the definite article “**the**” in English. However, unlike the case of the English language, אֵת can be inflected, and thereby it becomes the objective case of the respective pronoun, such as אוֹתִי (***OTI***), **me** (1st-person, singular, masculine or

feminine pronoun; as in "*He taught **me***."), אוֹתְךָ (***otCHA***), **you** (2nd-person, singular, masculine pronoun; as in "*He taught **you***."), etc. The word אֵת may also serve as the preposition **with**, and it can be inflected in that context as well, albeit differently, such as, אִתִּי (***iTI***), **with me**, אִתְּךָ (***itCHA***), **with you**, etc. The Hebrew word אֲשֶׁר (***aSHER***) is a conjunction, a part of speech that connects other words or phrases. אֲשֶׁר can mean **that** or **which**, **who** or **whom**, **because** or **for**, **as to** or **regarding**, and it may take on other meanings when combined with prepositions.

אֵת and אֲשֶׁר also combine into the phrase אֵת אֲשֶׁר (***ET aSHER***) [also אֶת־אֲשֶׁר]. This phrase, too, can take on several different meanings, as the grammatical syntax of a sentence, or verse, dictates. The major difference between the term אֲשֶׁר and the phrase אֵת אֲשֶׁר is that the preposition אֵת adds "new" specificity, since it is the marker of a definite direct object of the verb, and the particular translation depends on the context of the specific passage. In the case of Zechariah 12:10B(i), the phrase אֵת אֲשֶׁר must be read as, **because of/concerning/regarding him** [or **them**] **that** [or **who**] [verb], or simply **because** [verb] **him** [or **them**], but not just as **whom** or **the one**, which is common among Christian translations.

The following example demonstrates this usage in another passage in which the grammatical syntax is similar to that found at Zechariah 12:10B(i):

> **1Samuel 30:23 – And David said, "You will not do so, my brothers, CONCERNING THAT WHICH [אֵת אֲשֶׁר] the Lord has given us, and He watched over us, and delivered the troop that came against us into our hand.**

That the KJV and several other Christian "Old Testament" versions translate this passage in a manner that is close to being correct:

> **1Samuel 30:23(KJV) – Then said David, Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the LORD hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand.** [See also the American Standard Version, 21st Century King James Version, Darby Translation, and Young's Literal Translation for similar renditions.]

The meaning of the phrase אֵת אֲשֶׁר at Zechariah 12:10B(i) appears to have been better understood by the authors of the Christian Septuagint (LXX):[5]

> **Zechariah 12:10B(i)(LXX) - and they shall look upon me, because they have mocked me,**

These examples demonstrate that the common Christian translations of Zechariah 12:10B(i) are inconsistent with its Hebrew text and overall context.

[5] Although it is badly mistranslated and inaccurate, the LXX rendition bears little resemblance to the common Christian translations, yet it has the אֵת אֲשֶׁר at least partially right.

D. Zechariah 12:10 in context

A proper understanding of the pronouns in this verse should be sufficient to show that the various Christian renditions of Zechariah 12:10 are incompatible with the syntax of the verse, and the common Christian interpretation is inconsistent with context of the rest of the chapter.

The 12th Chapter in the Book of Zechariah describes a war of nations against Jerusalem (the war of Gog & Magog), in which Judeans fight on the side of the enemy for a while and, when they realize that God is with the people of Jerusalem, they "turn around" and join the battle against the enemy, which eventually will lead to the deliverance of Jerusalem and the restoration of its status. The victory will be followed by grievous mourning over those who fell in the battle.

Zechariah 12:7-14 clearly shows that the prophet could not possibly have spoken of Jesus. For example, the prophet makes the promise that Jerusalem and its inhabitants will be protected:

> **Zechariah 12:7-8 – (7) And the Lord will save the tents of Judah first, so that the splendor of the House of David and the splendor of the inhabitants of Jerusalem should not overwhelm Judah. (8) On that day, the Lord shall protect the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and it shall come to pass on that day that even the weakest among them shall be like David; and the House of David shall be as angels, like an angel of the Lord before them.**

The historical record testifies that, less than 40 years after Jesus died, Jerusalem was torched and destroyed by the Romans, and its people were expelled and exiled. So, this is a prophecy that has not yet been fulfilled.

The prophet also foretells the destruction of those nations that will attack Jerusalem:

> **Zechariah 12:9 – And it shall come to pass on that day, [that] I will seek to destroy all the nations that have come upon Jerusalem.**

However, according to the historical record, none of these nations were destroyed in the days of Jesus. This, too, remains a prophecy not yet fulfilled.

Finally, **the only son** [הַיָּחִיד (***ha'yaHID***)] and **the firstborn** [הַבְּכוֹר (***ha'b^{e}CHOR***)] are referenced in Zechariah 12:10. Although the prophet uses the definite article in both cases, it is evident from the context that these terms are mentioned in the sense of "a deceased only son" and "a deceased firstborn", i.e., any only son and any firstborn who has died – no one is identified by name anywhere in the nearby text as to whom specifically this might apply. Such usage of these terms is common in the Hebrew Bible, as the following example demonstrates:[6]

[6] Note: The terms הַבְּכֹר and הַבְּכוֹר are alternate spellings of the same word.

Deuteronomy 21:15-16 – (15) If a man has two wives, one beloved and another despised, and they have born him sons, the beloved and the despised one; and if the firstborn son [הַבֵּן הַבְּכֹר (*ha'BEN ha'b*[e]*CHOR*)] is hers who was hated; (16) and it will be on the day he [the husband] bequeaths his property to his sons, that he will not be able to give the son of the beloved one the birthright over the son of the despised one, the {real} firstborn [הַבְּכֹר].

On the other hand, whenever the same expression, הַבְּכוֹר, is used in reference to a particular individual, that person is named somewhere in the nearby text, as the following example demonstrates:

Genesis 41:51 - And Joseph called the name of the firstborn [הַבְּכוֹר] Manasseh; because "God has made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house."

Zechariah's intent in using these generic phrases here, albeit inclusive of the definite article, was to describe the intensity of the mourning in Jerusalem and throughout the land, that it would be like the grief over a deceased only son or firstborn.

Neither the historical record nor the accounts in the New Testament indicate that Jesus died in this war, and there are no recorded accounts of any intense mourning throughout Jerusalem and Judea following his death.

V. SUMMARY

Christian missionaries claim that this Zechariah 12:10 prophesies the crucifixion of Jesus, and point to the "Passion" accounts in the New Testament as its fulfillment.

The Jewish interpretations of Zechariah 12:10 fall into two general categories. The first and predominant view among the Jewish commentators is that the passage refers to an historical event; however, the opinions vary concerning which event is alluded to. The other view is that the passage is messianic, and that it alludes to the war of Gog & Magog, in which the hero, מָשִׁיחַ בֶּן־יוֹסֵף, Messiah son of Joseph, will be killed, and the mourning within the Jewish community following his death.

The analysis of this passage, which focused on Hebrew grammar and consistency with both syntax and overall context, demonstrates that the common Christian interpretation of this verse is incompatible with the Hebrew text. The primary problem with the Christian interpretation is that it is based on mistranslated and altered texts in the Christian Bible. These attempts to infuse Christological significance into the passage actually resulted in irreconcilable issues vis-à-vis both the Hebrew text and the historical record.

Conclusion: Zechariah 12:10 is not a prophecy about the crucifixion of Jesus.

ZECHARIAH 13:6 – OF FALSE PROPHETS, FARMHANDS, … (AND PLAYBOYS?)[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

The verse Zechariah 13:6, as it appears in King James Version "Old Testament" and several other Christian translations, has been a popular so-called "proof text" in the portfolio of Christian missionaries. It is yet another passage claimed to be a prophecy that foretells the crucifixion of Jesus.

A rigorous analysis of the Hebrew text of Zechariah 13:6 with careful attention to the context of the entire 13th chapter in the Book of Zechariah, demonstrates that the claim is without merit, because it is based on mistranslating this verse and lifting it out of its proper context.

II. COMPARISON OF CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

Side-by-side English renditions of the central passage in Zechariah 13 are displayed in Table II-1. The King James Version (KJV) translation is shown with pointers to cross-referenced passages in the New Testament. These references are taken from the New American Standard Bible (NASB). However, the corresponding passages below the table are quoted from the KJV for consistency. The highlighted words and phrases will be discussed later as part of the analysis.

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[1] Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:
- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in ***SMALL CAPS*** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
  - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
  - A vocalized letter ע is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
  - The letter ח is transliterated as "h̲"
  - The letter כ is transliterated as "ch"
  - The letter כּ is transliterated as "k"
  - The letter ק is transliterated as "q"
  - A vocalized ***SHVA*** (שְׁוָא נָע) is transliterated as a superscripted "e" following the consonant
  - There is no "doubling" of letters in the transliterations to reflect the ***daGESH*** (emphasis)

Table II-1 – Zechariah 13:3-7

	King James Version Translation	Jewish Translation from the Hebrew	The Hebrew Text	
	Zechariah 13		**זכריה יג**	
3	And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the LORD: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth.	And it shall come to pass, if a man still prophesies, then his father and his mother, who bore him, shall say to him, "You shall not live; for you have spoken falsely in the name of the Lord;" and his father and his mother, who bore him, shall thrust him through while he prophesies.	וְהָיָה כִּי־יִנָּבֵא אִישׁ עוֹד וְאָמְרוּ אֵלָיו אָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ יֹלְדָיו לֹא תִחְיֶה כִּי שֶׁקֶר דִּבַּרְתָּ בְּשֵׁם יהוה וּדְקָרֻהוּ אָבִיהוּ וְאִמּוֹ יֹלְדָיו בְּהִנָּבְאוֹ׃	ג
4	And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive.[(i)]	And it shall come to pass on that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed, each one of his vision when he has prophesies; and they will not wear a hairy mantle in order to deceive;	וְהָיָה ׀ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יֵבֹשׁוּ הַנְּבִיאִים אִישׁ מֵחֶזְיֹנוֹ בְּהִנָּבְאֹתוֹ וְלֹא יִלְבְּשׁוּ אַדֶּרֶת שֵׂעָר לְמַעַן כַּחֵשׁ׃	ד
5	But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.	And he shall say, "I am not a prophet; I am a tiller of the soil, for a man entrusted me with his cattle from my youth."	וְאָמַר לֹא נָבִיא אִישׁ־עֹבֵד אֲדָמָה אָנֹכִי כִּי־אָדָם הִקְנַנִי מִנְּעוּרָי׃	ה
6	And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.	And someone will say to him, "What are these wounds between your hands?" And he shall say, "Because I was beaten in the house of those who love me."	וְאָמַר אֵלָיו מָה הַמַּכּוֹת הָאֵלֶּה בֵּין יָדֶיךָ וְאָמַר אֲשֶׁר הֻכֵּיתִי בֵּית מְאַהֲבָי׃	ו
7	Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.[(ii)]	O sword, awaken against My shepherd, and against the man who is associated with Me! says the Lord of Hosts. Smite the shepherd, and the flock shall scatter, and I will return my hand upon the lower ones.	חֶרֶב עוּרִי עַל־רֹעִי וְעַל־גֶּבֶר עֲמִיתִי נְאֻם יהוה צְבָאוֹת הַךְ אֶת־הָרֹעֶה וּתְפוּצֶיןָ הַצֹּאן וַהֲשִׁבֹתִי יָדִי עַל־הַצֹּעֲרִים׃	ז

(i) Matthew 3:4(KJV) - And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

(ii) Matthew 26:31(KJV) - Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.

Mark 14:27(KJV) - And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.

With one notable exception, the two translations are reasonably consistent. Even the portions that are cross-referenced in the New Testament do not contain any gross mistranslation by the KJV translators. The exception is Zechariah 13:6, where the KJV, among a small number of other Christian translations, falsely translates as **in** the Hebrew word בֵּין (***BEIN***), **between**, thereby effecting a contextual change in the question from "**… What are these wounds BETWEEN thine hands? …**" to "**… What are these wounds IN thine hands? …**". The result of this mistranslation is that a rather obvious Christological significance has been infused into the entire verse. It is

interesting to note that most other Christian translations have retained the more general concept of someone with contusions on his upper body – chest & back – which is consistent with the meaning of the Hebrew text.

III. Overview of Christian and Jewish Interpretations

A. The Christian perspective

According to the Christian view, Chapter 13 of Zechariah is fertile with Christological innuendo. The foretelling of the remission of sins and the silencing of false prophets point to the initial Christian "messianic era", i.e., the first century C.E. This idea is further amplified with a claim of the prophetic suffering of Jesus and the dispersion of his disciples, of the destruction of the greater (unbelieving) part of the Jewish nation not long thereafter, and of the purification of a (believing) remnant of them, a distinctive group of people to God.

The New Testament reference passages quoted below Table II-1 appear to be invoking phrases found in various verses in the chapter. The "**… raiment of camel's hair …**" worn by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:4) alludes to a garment traditionally worn by Jewish prophets that is mentioned in Zechariah 13:4. The phrases "**… I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad …**" (Matthew 26:31) and "**… I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered …**" (Mark 14:27) represent the fulfillment of an alleged prophecy about the suffering of Jesus and the dispersal of his followers, which is found in a similar phrase in Zechariah 13:7(KJV), "**… smite the shepherd, and the flock shall be scattered …**".

It is interesting to note that Zechariah 13:6, the one verse from this chapter most often used by Christian missionaries as a so-called "proof text", was not invoked or alluded to in the New Testament by any of its authors. From their silence on this contemporary Christian missionary "proof text", it appears that the authors of the New Testament did not perceive it as having any Christological significance.

More detailed commentary may be found in the standard Christian commentaries such as, Matthew Henry and Jamieson, Fausset, & Brown.[2]

B. The Jewish perspective

The 13th chapter in the Book of Zechariah includes a collection of messianic prophecies and, in that respect, the Christian and Jewish perspectives are consistent. The major gap between the two views concerns the identity of the Messiah.

The era in which the events described in this chapter will take place is identified in Zechariah 13:1 as being the messianic era. The description of the *spring of*

[2] These commentaries are available at - http://www.blueletterbible.org/

living water that will be flowing in Jerusalem, something that was never there before, is an allusion to the messianic era. A reference to this spring is found again in the next chapter:

> **Zechariah 14:8 - And it shall be on that day, that living water shall go out from Jerusalem - half of it toward the eastern sea, and half of it toward the western sea; in summer and in winter it shall be.**

Ezekiel also speaks of this flowing water in his description of the Third Temple:

> **Ezekiel 47:1 - And he brought me back to the door of the house and, behold, water flowed from under the threshold of the house eastward, for the front of the house faced to the east; and the water came down from beneath, from the right side of the house, from south of the altar.**

The first six verses of this chapter deal with the removal of impurity from Judah. Zechariah speaks of a false prophet stabbed to death by his parents for his deceitful activities. The prophet also describes the lamenting by the false prophets about being farm hands and shepherds from their youth, and having been assaulted and beaten up in familiar surroundings.

The last three verses of the chapter describe the punishment of (a sword turned against) the enemies of Israel. The leaders of the (Gentile) nations were the shepherds, God's colleagues, to whom He entrusted the fate of His people Israel (the flock). However, when they oppress instead of guard "the flock", God will unleash the sword against them. Then, the flock will be free to escape, and God will turn His vengeance even against the subordinates who helped molest Israel.

IV. A Closer Look at Zechariah 13:6

A. The traditional approach: The false prophet and foolish shepherd

As noted above, Zechariah 13:6 is used by Christian missionaries as a "proof text" that foretells the crucifixion of Jesus:

> **Zechariah 13:6 - And someone will say to him, "What are these wounds BETWEEN your hands?" And he shall say, "Because I was beaten in the house of those who love me."**

> **Zechariah 13:6(KJV) - And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds IN thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.**

When this verse is read alone, without the rest of the verses around it, it could leave the (false) impression of an allusion to the suffering that Jesus endured around the time of his crucifixion. However, when the verse is read in context, a rather different picture emerges about this wounded individual. The backdrop for the scenario is set up in the two preceding verses:

> **Zechariah 13:4-5 – (4) And it shall come to pass on that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed, each one of his vision when he prophesies; and they will not wear a hairy mantle in order to deceive. (5) And he shall say, "I am not a prophet; I am a tiller of the soil, for a man entrusted me with his cattle from my youth."**

This individual in Zechariah 13:6, the one with the contusions from being beaten, turns out to be a *false prophet*, even though he wore the *hairy mantle*, which was a distinctive garment worn by prophets of Israel (see, e.g., 1Kings 19:13,19; 2Kings 2:8,13,14). These false prophets will eventually disown their "calling" and claim to belong to the humblest working class. A similar declaration, though in a reversed sense – a true prophet humbly declaring that he does not profit from his prophecies (unlike a false prophet who is remunerated for prophesying) – is found in the Book of Amos:

> **Amos 7:14 - And Amos replied and said to Amaziah, "I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet; but I am a cattle herder and an examiner of sycamores."**

Zechariah 13:7 is also a verse that is important to the context, particularly as it applies to the claims made by Christian missionaries:

> **Zechariah 13:7 - "O sword, awaken against My shepherd, and against the man who is associated with Me!" says the Lord of Hosts. "Smite the shepherd, and the flock shall scatter, and I will return My hand upon the lower ones."**

This shepherd is also the one previously described as both *foolish* and *worthless*:

> **Zechariah 11:15-17 – (15) And the Lord said to me, "Take for yourself yet another thing, the instrument of a foolish shepherd. (16) For, behold! I am setting up a shepherd in the land, he will not remember [to count] those who are missing, nor will he seek the young ones, nor heal the broken one; nor will he feed the one which stands still, but he will eat the meat of the healthy ones, and break their hoofs into pieces. (17) Woe to My worthless shepherd who abandons the flock; may a sword strike his arm and his right eye; his arm shall surely wither, and his right eye will go completely blind.**

The fate of this *foolish* and *worthless* shepherd is a certainty; he will be smitten.

Does Zechariah 13:6 still "point" to Jesus when read in context? It is not likely that Christians will agree to characterize Jesus, their lord and savior, as being a *false prophet* and a *foolish* and *worthless* shepherd.

B. Another approach: The false prophet and the "playboy" farmhand

Another way to read the passage, especially Zechariah 13:4-6, gives an interesting twist to this prophecy.

The stage is set in the opening verse of the chapter, which implies that sins such as idolatry and other abominations will be rampant in the land at some time in the future, and that a spring of living water flowing from the Temple grounds will be available for the spiritual and ritual purification of the people. Then, by applying alternative, yet perfectly correct, translations to the terms הִקְנַנִי (***hiqNAni***) in Zechariah 13:5 and מְאַהֲבָי (***m***^{e}***ahaVAI***) in Zechariah 13:6, a rather different interpretation of the passage emerges.

The term הִקְנַנִי in Zechariah 13:5, a "poetic" contraction of the phrase

הִקְנָה אוֹתִי (*hiqNAH OTI*), is commonly translated as **[he] entrusted me with his cattle**, since the Hebrew word for cattle is מִקְנֶה (*miqNEH*), which derives from the same verbal root. However, the term הִקְנַנִי also has a different meaning. The conjugated & inflected verb הִקְנַנִי derives from the root קנה (*QOF-NUN-HEH*), **[to] buy**, and is the past tense conjugation in the *hif'IL* stem (the active causative form of a verb in Hebrew grammar) and means **he who has turned over possession of me [to others]**, or **he who has made [others] buy me**. When combined with the reference to the subject's youth, this could easily mean that these people, in addition to being healthy young farmhands, May have also been "**hired out**" for some other purpose.

The word מְאַהֲבָי in Zechariah 13:6, a "poetic" contraction of the phrase הַמְּאַהֲבִים שֶׁלִּי (*ha'm^{e}ahavIM sheLI*), provides the clue to what that other purpose might have been. The word מְאַהֲבָי, commonly translated as **those who love me**, or **my friends**, also has another, actually more accurate, meaning that is lost in these common renditions. This word, מְאַהֲבָי, means **my (male) lovers**, or **my paramours**, i.e., **those who desire me [sexually]**. It is the plural form of the masculine noun מְאַהֵב (*m^{e}aHEV*), **a [male] lover**, inflected the 1st-person singular, masculine (and feminine) gender, **my [male] lovers** [in the romantic sense; the plural, מְאַהֲבִים (*m^{e}ahavIM*), can be applied in either the masculine or a generic context]. The noun מְאַהֵב is derived from the root verb אהב (*Alef-HEH-VET*), **[to] love**, conjugated in the *pi'EL* stem (the active intensive verb form in Hebrew grammar).

The Hebrew Bible contains 16 instances of this noun, in various inflexions, and in all cases it is used in the romantic context that goes along with sexual desire or lust. Table IV.B-1 shows these 16 instances of the noun and their common translations in Jewish and Christian renditions of the respective passages.

Table IV.B-1 – The noun מְאַהֵב in the Hebrew Bible

Hebrew Term	#	Pronunciation	Form of noun	Citation	Typical translations (Christian [KJV] & Jewish [ArtScroll Stone Tanach[])
מְאַהֲבַיִךְ	7	*m^{e}ahavAyich*	2nd-person, singular, feminine	Jeremiah 22:20,22, 30:14; Ezekiel 16:33,36,37, 23:22	thy lovers/your paramours
מְאַהֲבֶיהָ	5	*m^{e}ahavEha*	3rd-person, singular, feminine	Ezekiel 23:5,9; *Hosea 2:9,12,15	her lovers/her paramours
מְאַהֲבָי	4	*m^{e}ahavAi*	1st-person, singular, masculine/feminine	*Hosea 2:7,14; Lamentations 1:19	my lovers/my paramours
				Zechariah 13:6	**my friends/those who loved me**

* The verses Hosea 2:7,9,12,14,15 correspond to Hosea 2:5,7,10,12,13 in Christian bibles

The proper term to be used in describing those who love someone, not necessarily in the romantic sense, and inflected in the 1st-person, singular, masculine or feminine gender, is אוֹהֲבַי (*ohavAI*), **those who love me**. This

noun also derives from the same root verb אהב, except that it derives from the *pa'AL/QAL* stem, the basic Hebrew verb form. The Hebrew Bible contains 20 instances of the noun אוֹהֵב (***OHEV***), in various inflexions, five of which are of the particular form אוֹהֲבַי – at Exodus 20:6**, Deuteronomy 5:10**, Psalms 38:12, Proverbs 8:17,21. [** - includes the preposition -לְ (***l^e-***), **to** or **for**].

Tilling the land can cause wounds on one's hands and arms, perhaps even on one's legs and feet; but what could cause wounds "between the hands", i.e., across the chest and perhaps on one's back? In what type of activities did these youthful farmhands, shepherds, and false prophets engage when they were not tilling the land, watching the herds, and spouting false prophecies? Could they have been "playboys for hire" who were roughed up by those who "rented" them?

Surely Christians would not want to have a "type and shadow" of their lord and savior Jesus someone who is a false prophet and a youthful farmhand hired out to engage in acts to which the Hebrew Bible refers as abominations.

These two perspectives on Zechariah 13:6, in context, should serve as sobering "food for thought" to all who attempt to use this verse as a prophecy of Jesus' death.

Sidebar note about true prophets: Who were the (true) prophets and prophetesses of Israel? What distinguished them from the others? While the gift of prophecy included an ability to foretell the future, a prophet was far more than a person with that capability. A prophet was a spokesperson for God, a person ostensibly "chosen" by Him to speak to people on His behalf and convey a message or teaching. [True] prophets were role models of holiness, scholarship, and closeness to God, setting the standards for the entire community. Moreover, the primary job of a prophet was not to foretell the future, but to arouse the people and the government to repentance and observance. In the process of executing their primary mission, the prophets often resorted to the description of future events - some in the near future, some in the intermediate future, and some in the distant (messianic era) future.

V. SUMMARY

The analysis of the 13th chapter in the Book of Zechariah demonstrates the importance of reading and understanding a verse or passage in its proper context.

The claim made by Christian missionaries concerning Zechariah 13:6 has been shown to be without merit. Moreover, it is noteworthy that, in their silence on this verse, the authors of the New Testament found no Christological significance in it. This would indicate that the presence of this verse in the portfolio of Christian missionaries is a much more recent development. Perhaps this is the reason that many legitimate Christian apologists no longer use Zechariah 13:6 as a "proof text".